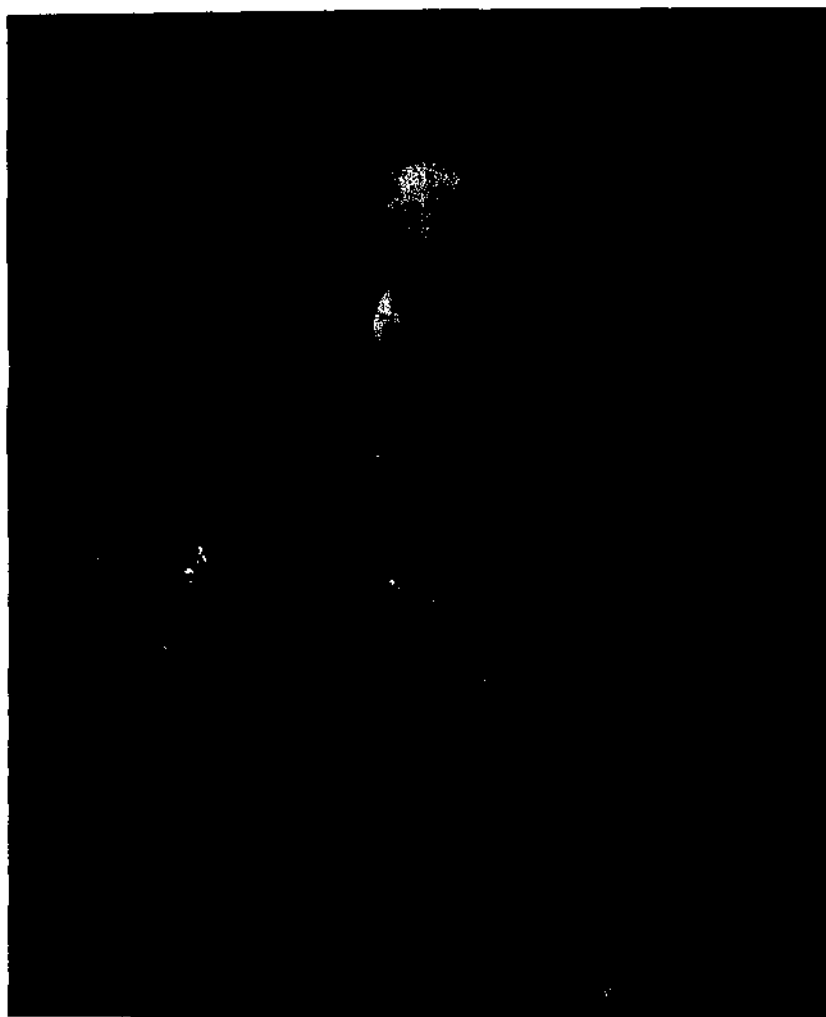


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MEMOIRS OF GENERAL DE CAULAINCOURT
DUKE OF VICENZA

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1812-1813



GENERAL DE CAULAINCOURT
DUKE OF VICENZA

*From the painting by Gérard
in the possession of Countess Gérard de Moustier*

**MEMOIRS OF
GENERAL de CAULAINCOURT
DUKE of VICENZA**



1812-1813

Edited by
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CASELL
and Company Limited
London, Toronto, Melbourne
and Sydney

First published . . . 1935

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY THE EDINBURGH PRESS, EDINBURGH
F10.935

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Armand Augustin Louis de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza and Master of the Horse to Napoleon, was the scion of an ancient Picard family and the son of General de Caulaincourt, a soldier of the old regime who in his later years gave a wavering allegiance to the Republic. Born in 1773, Armand was still in his teens when the Revolution took place, but he was already in the army. He saw active service under Hoche, distinguished himself in various ways, and was eventually sent with Aubert Dubayet on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople. Caulaincourt's success in his minor role at the Porte was so marked that on his return, after renewed activities in the army and attaining the rank of colonel, he was chosen by Talleyrand to take a letter from the First Consul to the Tsar, with private instructions to remain in Petersburg as an unofficial observer. This was in 1801. After some months at the Russian Court he was allowed to return, and on reaching Paris was gazetted aide-de-camp to the First Consul. This was the beginning of his intimacy with Napoleon.

A full account of Caulaincourt's life is given in the Appendix to the second volume of these Memoirs; here it will suffice to say that Napoleon's confidence was retained through the difficult years of the Empire, that he was sent as ambassador to Russia in 1807, and remained there for two and a half years performing the unenviable task of keeping the peace between his master and Alexander I. "There are moments when an honest man could wish himself dead," he observed on one occasion. In 1808 he was created Duke of Vicenza; four years previously he had been made Master of the Horse, no sinecure as it entailed personal responsibility for the entire Imperial stables, for the courier

service between Paris and wherever the Emperor chanced to be, and for many minor but onerous jobs.

Caulaincourt's experience as ambassador at Petersburg would have made him a more prominent figure in the 1812 campaign had not Napoleon suspected him of sympathy with the Russians. How this affected their relations can be traced in Caulaincourt's own narrative. But Napoleon really esteemed him as much as it was in his nature to esteem any man, and gave point to this esteem by selecting him as his companion on that breathless dash from Russia to Paris, when the gulf between sovereign and subject was forgotten during the weary hours of sitting cheek by jowl, cramped and sleepless, in the awkward sledge or stuffy carriage that took them from one end of Europe to the other.

Enough has been said to explain who Caulaincourt was and why these Memoirs are of value; some explanation must now be given as to why they have never been published before.

In 1857, ten years after Caulaincourt's death, a couple of volumes were published in Paris entitled *Souvenirs du duc de Vicence, recueillis et publiés par Charlotte de Sor*. The author was a certain Madame Eillaux, who had met Caulaincourt at Plombières the year before his death and, so she alleged, had obtained from him the substance of these *Souvenirs*. They were so silly, such a patent tissue of absurdities and contradictions, that only the uncritical readers of the time, avid for anything that might remind them that France had once produced a great man, could have taken them seriously. But the Napoleon rage was at its height, and the exuberant "Charlotte de Sor" came out with *Napoléon et le duc de Vicence, Suite des Souvenirs du duc de Vicence*, and *Napoléon en Belgique et en Hollande*. It would be ungenerous to stigmatize any one of these curious productions as less reliable than the others; none bore more than a hazy resemblance to fact or truth.

Not that Caulaincourt had neglected to write his own Memoirs. He had done so; historians knew it, and so did a good many of his contemporaries, who would have given

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

much to see what he was telling posterity about themselves. But during his lifetime Caulaincourt never let his papers out of his own possession, no doubt adding or modifying as time threw its mellowing light on past difficulties and old enemies. He made no attempt to tell the story of his life, not even the story of his official life; he started with the aftermath of the Congress of Erfurt and went no further than the Treaty of Fontainebleau and the agony of the Empire. There are a few fragmentary notes on the Hundred Days and other events, and these have been welded into the biographical notice in the Appendix to the second volume.

The manuscript of the Memoirs was kept jealously guarded by Caulaincourt's son, a copy being deposited, along with other papers, in a black trunk that was given into the safe keeping of some cousins in Brussels. That was in 1870; twenty years later the black trunk was taken to Paris, and in 1914, when it seemed possible that the Germans would invade that far, the trunk was taken off for safety and hidden in a château at Paray le Monial. After the Armistice it was brought back to Paris.

Only on two occasions have the Memoirs been shown to outsiders. In 1855 Thiers was allowed to consult them, though with such irritating restrictions that they were of no use to him; many years later Albert Vandal was able to study them when preparing his *Napoléon et Alexandre Ier*. Other writers and historians have in vain attempted to gain access to the Caulaincourt Memoirs; for a hundred years blank but not always bland refusal has been the reponse to every request. Why? The reason is simple. During his lifetime and long after his death Caulaincourt was popularly credited with much of the responsibility for the murder of the Duke of Enghien. The stigma of this embittered his own life and was felt no less acutely by his son who, even at the time of his death in 1890, still felt that injustice was being done and that until his father's name had been cleared any observations or remarks of his would be attaint.

It was not until 1913 that a paragraph in the *Figaro* demonstrated to Caulaincourt's heirs that the time had come

to break this silence. The third Duke of Vicenza set about editing his great-grandfather's papers and everything was in train for their publication when war broke out and the Château de Caulaincourt was blown up, scattering the Duke's notes and papers to the winds. Fortunately the black trunk was safe at Paray le Monial; inside it were the five-and-twenty sealed bundles of papers, and from them has been prepared the text of which this volume is a translation.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE PETERSBURG EMBASSY	13

Preliminary—The Emperor's wish to send Caulaincourt as Ambassador to Petersburg—Caulaincourt's resistance—Napoleon's arguments—Caulaincourt is appointed Ambassador—Erfurt—Napoleon's conversation with Caulaincourt—Germany and Spain—Poland—Austria—The Congress of Erfurt—Its aim—Relations between the two Emperors—Results—Hints of a Russian marriage—Caulaincourt returns to Petersburg—He requests and obtains his recall—Return to France—Conversation with the Emperor: Russia, Alexander, threats of war, Poland, the Oldenburg affair—The Emperor's coldness towards Caulaincourt.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN	81
---------------------------------------	----

The Emperor's Journey through Holland and Belgium—The Winter of 1811–1812 in Paris—Conversations with the Emperor: the war with Russia—Caulaincourt's Discontent—Napoleon's attitude towards him—Conversations with the Emperor: England and the Peace; Russian affairs again—M. de Talleyrand and the Embassy to Vienna—Departure for Mainz—Conversations with Napoleon: the Duke of Bassano—the Turks—Arrival in Dresden—M. de Narbonne.

CHAPTER III

TOWARDS MOSCOW	115
--------------------------	-----

Departure from Dresden—Danzig—The King of Naples—The Passage of the Niemen—Conversations with the Emperor; his ideas on the new campaign—Kovno—Wilna—M. de Balachoff—Violent scene with the Emperor—Witepsk—The Emperor's state of mind—Smolensk—Valutina—The Moskowa—Arrival before Moscow.

CHAPTER IV

MOSCOW 211

Entry into Moscow—The Fire—The Emperor retires to Petrowskoie—Murat at the Advance Guard—M. Toutolmine—The Emperor returns to Moscow—Organization of the occupying forces—Shall we stay at Moscow?—The theatre at Moscow—Napoleon wishes to send Caulaincourt to Petersburg—Caulaincourt refuses—Lauriston's Mission—Napoleon's hesitation—The Russian Winter—The Winkowo skirmish—The Moscow administration.

CHAPTER V

THE RETREAT 290

I. FROM MOSCOW TO KRASNOË

The departure from Moscow—Malo-Jaroslawetz—Napoleon in danger—Wereia—M. de Wintzingerode—The Emperor contemplates a personal return to Paris—Mikhaelowska—News of the Malet conspiracy—The Emperor's impressions—Smolensk—Korytria: the Emperor again discusses his return to France.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETREAT 350

II. FROM KRASNOË TO SMORGONI

Krasnoë—Tactics of Ney and Davout—Orcha—Crossing the Beresina—State of the army—Molodetchna—The 29th Bulletin—Preparations for departure.

CHAPTER VII

BY SLEDGE WITH THE EMPEROR 411

I. FROM SMORGONI TO WARSAW

The start—The first stages—The Emperor leaves his carriage and takes to a sleigh—Conversations with the Emperor: on the war in Russia: on the fear inspired by Napoleon: on the Continental blockade: on England, Russia, peace, Poland, and Prussia: on England again: on the war in Spain: on the Spanish colonies: on Godoy: on the Spanish princes: on Talleyrand: on the Enghien affair: on M. de Bassano—Pultusk—Arrival at Warsaw.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER VIII

BY SLEDGE WITH THE EMPEROR	472
--------------------------------------	-----

II. FROM WARSAW TO DRESDEN

At Warsaw—M. de Pradt—The Polish Ministers—Departure from Warsaw—Kutno—Conversations with the Emperor: England, the internal affairs of the Empire; the ministers; Cambacérés, Fouché, Gaudin, Fontanes—Posen—Discussion about Clarke—Glogau—Buntzlau—Conversation: Napoleon looks back on his life; M. de Merveldt; the Egyptian Campaign; the 18th Brumaire; the Bourbons and their correspondents; the human race; history; the Congress; Louis XVI; the Madeleine and its destiny; the Chamber of Peers; internal politics; the Legion of Honour; conscription; the French character; the character of the Emperor; the Spanish colonies; the United States.

CHAPTER IX

BY SLEDGE WITH THE EMPEROR	536
--------------------------------------	-----

III. FROM DRESDEN TO PARIS

At Dresden—The King of Saxony—The Emperor's conversations—Daru: The Tsar Alexander; Abbé de Pradt; the men of the old regime; Bessières and Lannes—Leipzig—Erfurt, Eisenach; strange scene with the postmaster—Meeting with Montesquiou—The Rhine—The Emperor's conversations: Need for an aristocracy; the Malet affair—Verdun—Meaux.

CHAPTER X

ARRIVAL IN PARIS	561
----------------------------	-----

The Tuileries—Caulaincourt goes to see Cambacérés—The effect produced by his arrival—The 29th Bulletin—The retreat from Russia—A siege ration from Genoa—Conversations with the Emperor: the morale of the Army; the ministers; the King of Rome's governor; the Pope; the Concordat; Jesuits and the Polytechnique—The Emperor in his carriage—Portrait of the Emperor; facts about his life and habits—The King of Naples—Arrival in Paris of the Emperor's suite—News of the Army—The Malet Affair—The Emperor and Peace—The negotiations of 1813—The Emperor sets out on the German campaign.

INDEX	621
-----------------	-----

CHAPTER I

THE ST. PETERSBURG EMBASSY

THE events in Europe between 1807 and 1812 had so great an influence on those which followed later, by placing the balance of Europe's destinies into the hands of Russia, that I have felt it would be valuable to preserve the notes which I made regarding various circumstances of those years.

In writing them my sole motive was to keep an account of my life, my impressions, and my conduct. Since then I have come to regard them as indispensable material for the completion of the official part of my correspondence as Ambassador, and even, it may well be, for the history of that great epoch. For in that history everything connected with Russia is bound to be important, as that country was at the time second only to France in the affairs of the world.

My aim will be fulfilled if my notes help also to formulate opinion on the character and the political views of the Emperor Napoleon.

His words, his judgments and reflections, I believe, should form the best possible instruction for his son,¹ and offer the only explanation worthy of that great man which can be given to the public regarding the events which they judge and criticize without first-hand knowledge of them, and which men nearly always view with the hostility and injustice meted out to repay the great services of those whom fortune has deserted.

Admittedly, it will often be observed that the Emperor's energetic expressions have escaped my memory; but those who saw him at close quarters will find, I trust, his real thought, and at all times the certainty of my good faith.

¹ The Duke of Vicenza intended to dedicate his memoirs to the Duke of Reichstadt.

The memorialist's style doubtless falls far beneath such a subject; but the reader's indulgence is deserved by the intention of the man who, in his view, is preserving, with these memories of great happenings, precious material for history. I have been so chary of seeming a flatterer, and my opinion inclined me so strongly to condemn the course of politics and the enterprises of this period, that what then seemed to me impartiality now strikes me as a frequently severe censure rather than the account of a friendly narrator. But I frankly offer my impressions just as I received them at the time, preferring to be blamed rather than to be under the suspicion of having altered what I wrote at the time of these events.

My notes were made everywhere, at my desk and in camp, every day and at all times of day; they are the work of every moment. I have touched up nothing and disguised nothing, because although there were moments when the man showed himself, it was the demigod whom one recognized most often. More than once the thought occurred to me that this journal, written under the very eyes of the Emperor, might fall into his hands; but that reflection did not check my pen. This fact is an answer to those who have claimed that men could neither think nor speak nor write under his reign, and that the truth made him an irreconcilable enemy. No doubt the truth chilled his goodwill, but his strong and lofty character raised him above all criticisms made in good faith. I was confident that, as my notes were only the exact record of what I had said to him, they would seem to him injurious only if I published them as an attack on his policy and his fame.

This journal includes certain details previous to the date of my ambassadorship, collected subsequently to the period when each event was proceeding. They may not all be genuinely interesting, but they have at least the merit of accuracy. Some of them, in my view, are indispensable for the explanation of various circumstances of my public career.

In the lives of men entrusted with public affairs, as in

PRELIMINARY

the progress of events, everything is closely linked up and connected with history. Subsidiary details are necessary because they often explain the circumstances which have brought about certain events. I am bound therefore to speak about myself. As the Congress of Erfurt was dovetailed into my ambassadorship, I have felt that it formed an essential part of my mission. The notes which I made with scrupulous accuracy from the time of the Emperor's arrival in Dresden in 1812 until his return to Paris after the Russian campaign have likewise seemed to me the essential completion of this first part.

If these pages should some day be read and severity imputed to me, I hope that allowance will be made for the happenings under the influence of which they were penned.

Many things, on the other hand, must be cut out, for although I have striven for accuracy and truth, my first resolve has been to injure no man.

Having written down all that the Emperor said to me just as if he had been dictating to me, it will be understood that this journal is but a sketch, and that I have reserved to myself the retention of only such condemnation as will be sternly demanded by historical truth, and will accordingly be indispensable in justifying eulogies.

At the time of Tilsit¹ the Emperor wished to appoint me as Ambassador to Russia. It was on my second refusal, at Königsberg,² that General Savary was despatched to Petersburg to take charge, pending the choice of an Ambassador.³

At that time I was anxious to find an opportunity of leaving the service and marrying.⁴ The Emperor, thinking

¹ June-July 1807.

² The Emperor resided at Königsberg from 10th-13th July, 1807.

³ Savary was appointed to this mission on July 13th (Napoleon to Savary, Königsberg, July 13, 1807: *Correspondance de Napoléon I*, 12902), and left at once for Petersburg where he arrived on July 23rd. Cf. *Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo*, II, 259, and Albert Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 115.

⁴ He proposed to marry Mme de Canisy. From this period can be dated the sentiments inspired in M. de Caulaincourt by the beautiful Mme de Canisy. Married at an early age to her cousin, at that time Master of the Horse to the Em-

that I should be easier to persuade on my return to Paris, after having seen my friends, whom he believed to be the cause of my refusal, spoke to me on several occasions of this ambassadorship, but without altering my determination. Not even from General Duroc, whom the Emperor sent to persuade me, did I conceal my desire to enjoy some rest and to leave the service. Duroc went so far as to tell me that His Majesty demanded my acceptance of the embassy, if only for six months; that this was the only way by which my projected matrimonial affairs could be arranged; that my absence would smooth everything over; that the Emperor would give his consent, and everything would be agreeably settled during my absence in Petersburg. My plans for retirement seemed to him inadmissible so long as war continued. The Emperor, he told me, would make it an excuse for breaking that which I was concerned to conciliate. All that I could obtain from Duroc's loyal kindness was, that he would seize any favourable opportunity of mentioning my matrimonial plans, which were made difficult to carry out by my refusal to proceed to Petersburg.

In the end the Emperor had apparently given up the idea of appointing me to this post, for a few months later he sent as Ambassador the Comte de La Forest.¹ His arrangements were made; he was indeed just on the point of leaving for Petersburg in October, at the same time as M. Tolstoy, the Russian Ambassador, was expected in Paris,² when the

peror, and neglected by him, she attracted the eyes of all the Court by her dazzling beauty. M. de Caulaincourt fell passionately in love with her, and this attachment, more or less shared for some years, turned him to thoughts of marriage. . . . When the return of the King condemned M. de Caulaincourt, the Duke of Vicenza, to a life of retirement, she wished to share his misfortunes and married him. *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, II, 267.

¹ Antoine René Charles Mathurin de La Forest (1756-1846) had been secretary of the French delegation at Lunéville, minister at Munich, at Ratisbon and at Berlin (August 1 to October 6, 1806). In August 1807 he was appointed Ambassador at Petersburg. M. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, in the note inserted over the *Correspondance du Comte de La Forest*, I, xxv, says that he declined the mission. In March 1808 La Forest was appointed Ambassador at Madrid, and kept the post until May 1813. He was Minister of Foreign Affairs from April 3 to May 12, 1814, and a State Minister and member of the Privy Council in 1825.

² In August 1807 Alexander appointed as his representative in Paris Count Peter Tolstoy, lieutenant-general, brother of the Grand Marshal.

EMPEROR'S WISH TO SEND CAULAINCOURT TO PETERSBURG

Emperor suddenly changed all his plans and reverted to his first idea, on the arrival at Fontainebleau of M. Eugène de Montesquiou, the orderly officer bringing despatches from General Savary, with whom he had spent a couple of months.¹

"Savary is anxious to remain at Petersburg," he said to me, "but he is not the man for me there. He is useful to me here! He advises me that a military man is wanted, someone who can attend parades, a man whose age, manners, tastes and openness can win the favour of the Tsar Alexander, and whose diplomatic exterior does not undermine his confidence. Montesquiou tells me the same thing; I need there a man of good birth, whose manners, bearing and attentiveness to women and society are pleasing to the Court.² Montesquiou spoke to me frankly about this. La Forest's diplomatic gravity will scare the Tsar and be displeasing to the Court.³ Alexander has retained kindly feelings towards you. You will be able to accompany him everywhere. You will be a general or an aide-de-camp when necessary, an ambassador when that is called for. The affairs of the world centre there. . . . Universal peace depends on Petersburg. You must go."

Without giving me time to say a word, he entered into countless details about the Tsar Alexander, about Russia, about his information from General Savary,⁴ and, without waiting for any reply, which he doubtless thought would certainly be no more affirmative than in the past, he urged on his horse, which he did not pull up until he was back in the centre of his party and was sure that I could not answer

¹ Rodrigue Charles Eugène de Montesquiou-Fézensac, born in Paris on August 15, 1782, was later colonel of the 13th Chasseurs and Chamberlain to the Empress.

² See Albert Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 141, regarding the reasons which actuated the selection of Caulaincourt. The Emperor's words here reported confirm what Vandal says.

³ In the postscript to his letter to Savary of November 1st (*Correspondance*, 13318) Napoleon said: "I am definitely sending Caulaincourt as Ambassador Extraordinary to Russia. . . . I was originally going to send La Forest, but feared that he was too old, and that it might be thought he was not sufficiently trusted by me, which is of primary importance."

⁴ Montesquiou had brought Napoleon a letter and a report from Savary, dated October 9th.

him. At the end of the hunt the Emperor again spoke about Russia, and mentioned what he called my absurd repugnance for affairs, talking about the services which could be rendered to France at that Court, the necessity of having there a man at once upright, devoid of all intriguing spirit, and a friend of peace.

"The maintenance of European peace," he said, "depends on it. It is the fair Mme de C——¹ who keeps you in Paris. But your affairs, as you wish to marry, will be settled better at a distance than near at hand."

I voiced a few arguments, the best I could think of, to lead his choice in other directions, but he seemed not to listen. On returning to the Palace, the Emperor told me to wait in his study immediately after his dinner, and to go in by the secretaries' entrance. An hour's conversation was devoted to proving that I owed my services to my country and my sovereign, and that I could not decline a mission which would not only be useful to them but honourable to myself. The Emperor told me that I would remain there only for one year, that my marriage arrangements would be settled during that time, and that on my return I should do as I pleased.

I marvelled at the patience, and, I may say, the kindness of the Emperor, for the obstinacy of my refusals and the obstructiveness of my "no's," with no good reason behind them, were such as might have exasperated him extremely.

Early next morning he summoned me, and once again lectured me with the object of securing my consent. He left me in a genial mood and I thought my case was won, but an hour later Duroc came in to tell me that the Emperor insisted on my acceptance. I stood firm, and was the more inclined to think that the Emperor would look elsewhere as I had already noticed some irritation in him the previous evening. In the Emperor's apartments, when the Court assembled in the evening, he pointedly refrained from speaking to me, but my hopes were of short duration.

At the levee next day [November 2, 1807], without

¹ Mme de Canisy.

having said a word to me on entering beforehand, the Emperor announced his decision on the Petersburg embassy. As he was to leave within four days' time for Venice and Italy, this procedure enabled me to gauge the possible force of fresh representations on my part. I resigned myself.

An hour later the Emperor sent for me; his first words were: "Monsieur l'Ambassadeur. . . ." And then, "You're a stubborn fellow," he said, jokingly, and pinching my ear. After repeating his remarks in previous conversations, he bade me give very detailed orders for the arrangements of his forthcoming journey, and to see to it that the functions which I exercised as Master of the Horse should not suffer through my absence. He asked for my promise to set off for Petersburg six days after his departure, and ordered me to remain at Fontainebleau until he himself left, so that we could thoroughly discuss matters.

At this moment M. Tolstoy arrived.¹ He was petted and caressed, but the first interchange of views showed the Emperor that this was not a man upon whom cajolery would have effect; he told me that he was imbued with prepossessions, even with many prejudices, but nevertheless had rectitude and a certain openness. He also complained to me that he had not wit enough to grasp and judge certain questions, that he was of a suspicious temper, and that this disposition of mind made him unsuitable for public affairs.² The truth is that his too obvious suspiciousness made him appear difficult to persuade. He had taken quite literally all the speeches and promises made at Tilsit. Public affairs were not his province, and he was ill at ease in his position and embarrassed at being on the great stage where he had to make his bow. Later events, and the events of that time in Spain, may also have given food for thought to the rulers in Petersburg and their ambassador.

¹ Count Peter Tolstoy handed his credentials to the Emperor at Fontainebleau on November 6th, and was received in private audience next day, when he handed to Napoleon a personal letter from Alexander (*Correspondance*, 11339).

² "A soldier of the days of the Empress Catherine II, an able general, but no diplomat, an avowed foe to the Franco-Russian alliance, and a man of little perspicacity and mediocre abilities."—Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhaelovitch, *Relations*, I, viii.

At Tilsit the Emperor Napoleon had gone far to meet the ideas of the Tsar Alexander. He had gone further in words and aspirations than he was willing to go in policy, and was vexed at finding an extremely positive man who accepted literally all that had been repeated to him, and who was, as he said, all of a piece.

"This M. Tolstoy," the Emperor further remarked to me, "has all the notions of the Faubourg Saint-Germain and all the prepossessions of the old Court of Petersburg before Tilsit. He sees only the ambition of France, and at heart he deplores the change in the Russian political system, and especially its alteration in regard to England. He may be a very gallant fellow, but his stupidity makes me regret Markov.¹ One could talk with Markov; he understood questions of policy. This man is startled by everything."

The Emperor was not in error about the prepossessions of M. Tolstoy.

The Emperor set off for Italy,² and I left for Russia immediately after his departure.³ I could make no preparations. I was obliged to fall back on men of business, and paid dearly for their aid. On my return, M. D——, to whom I had entrusted my interests, had robbed me disgracefully. I had to make a second payment of 100,000 francs for silver, and many accounts which he did not settle although he had received the money for them. He cost me 200,000 francs.

After a year's stay at Petersburg, I accompanied the Tsar Alexander to Erfurt, hoping, and even convinced, that I should not be returning to Russia.⁴ During my sojourn at Erfurt the Emperor Napoleon frequently discussed affairs with me, but broke off the conversation as soon as I mentioned my return to Paris. Once, finding me more insistent,

¹ Count Arcadius Ivanovitch Markov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was sent to Paris under Catherine II and then dismissed by Paul I. Alexander sent him back to represent Russia under the Consulate in 1802; in that capacity he signed the Franco-Russian peace, but was recalled, in deference to Bonaparte's complaints, at the end of 1803.

² At 6 a.m. on November 16, 1807.

³ Caulaincourt reached Petersburg on December 5/17, 1807.

⁴ Caulaincourt left Petersburg on September 11, 1808, and reached Erfurt on September 24th.

he said: "We shall arrange that when the Congress is over."

As that time approached, Duroc was again sent to make me listen to reason on the need for my return to Petersburg. In vain did I urge the pledge given to me that I should be left there for only one year.

The Emperor allowed me to go on hoping till the last day. Then, one morning, he told me that I must choose between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and my embassy; that I had been useful as ambassador, *that I must remain there*; that in the present state of Europe, *the maintenance of relations with Russia was the safeguard of peace, and this depended on me*, because I was acceptable to the Tsar Alexander; that the latter monarch had told him so; that he could see how I had inspired confidence in him and that I could leave him only if I were to take over the Ministry; that this was the only means of preserving the existing state of good relations; that Austria was announcing hostile intentions; that the attitude of the Petersburg government was the sole arbiter of peace during his absence in Spain; that to this end there must be no conceivable doubt as to his intentions, nor as to the maintenance of the alliance, and so that Europe must without fail believe in a perfect state of accord; and finally that he desired my return to Petersburg, where I should be all the more useful to him as M. Rumiantsof¹ was to be in Paris over the English negotiation, and if a settlement could be agreed upon with that government, it was important that he should have beside Tsar Alexander a man known to the latter and already fully acquainted with the course of events.

From the beginning of the interview the Emperor complained of the Tsar Alexander's failure to see eye to eye with him in his anti-Austrian views. He kept on telling me that the Tsar had changed, that he seemed to have some

¹ Count Nicholas Rumiantsof had been Russian Foreign Minister since September, 1807. By Article 2 of the Convention of Erfurt it was agreed by Russia and France to appoint plenipotentiaries to negotiate peace with England, and to send them with that object in view to the continental city which England might appoint.

mental reservation, for the only means of preventing Austria from making war, and from again compromising himself was to show decisiveness and act against her by common accord. The first concern, he urged, was to use every means to lend colour to the alliance for the securing of this result; Austria's attitude was fostering England's hopes of a new coalition and preventing the establishment of peace, and the longer the period of waiting, the longer would be the condition of distress caused by the war with England; Austria was England's last hope, and we must bare our teeth at her.

Conversation on this objective and on the general affairs of Europe was renewed on several occasions. Far from being upset by my observations, opposed though they were to the ideas which he wished to see prevail and with which he sought to imbue me, the Emperor spurred me on to talk with frankness. I frequently pointed out to him that his insistence on the offensive attitude which he wanted Russia to assume against Austria, might cause a fear that he was resolved to avenge himself on that Power before sending his troops into Spain, and that this opinion, and even the suspicion of it, must be damaging to his policies, especially as the Tsar Alexander seemed to me to be making peaceful relations with Austria his primary concern.

I added that it was known from experience that, His Majesty being always inclined to throw down the glove, he would be no less inclined to pick it up, and that there was even more fear of his secret views and his ambition than of a sudden stroke made by Austria; in fine, that Russia believed herself to be serving the cause of a secure peace by an attitude of extreme reserve, which might indeed damage rather than help the maintenance of that peace if Austria were so foolish as to wish to make war alone; that Russia, in view of the present state of Prussia, had good reason to suspect our influence and even to fear Austria.

I further added that our insistence was calculated to heighten this distrust, and that if he wished to keep troops in Germany and to retain the strongholds of the Oder, I would strongly urge him not to revert too much to this

question, as Austria's anxiety might win over Russia, however definite she might then be in the alliance to force England to peace, an objective which attracted his whole attention as a means of reaching a stable peace for all. I also argued that to force England to make peace had been what was termed the underlying idea of Tilsit; that this noble aim was the basis of the alliance, and that the whole of the Tsar Alexander's policy was openly directed towards achieving and attaining it as soon as possible, as all the sacrifices which he had demanded from his nation had been made with that end in view; that a new war with Austria could not be put forward in the light of a speedier means to that end, for the mere appearance of such a war might chill enthusiasm and damage the alliance. I urged him, therefore, to ponder these considerations, if he was determined in the matter, and finally to reflect that nothing could be hoped for from pressing a formidable course upon Russia, as that Power would see in her agreement with ourselves against Austria, in threats, and above all in intervention, a means for His Majesty to embark upon that war and to overthrow Austria, a consequence which she dreaded above anything else.

These considerations, repeated in several conversations, led me to discuss affairs in Spain and the effect which they had produced.

The Emperor answered:

"No doubt there has been there a convergence of vexatious, even unpleasant, circumstances. But what does that matter to the Russians? They have not been over-particular about the methods of partition and subjection in Poland. This is keeping me busy far away from themselves; that is just what they need; and so they're delighted.

"In any case, all the intrigues of the princes of Spain have been independent of my own will; I intervened in their affairs only when the King and his son arrived at Bayonne for mutual denunciations. I did not force Charles IV to come there; he abdicated of his own free will. As for Ferdinand, I could not entrust myself to his bad faith, and that of his counsellors, once I had seen them at close quarters. Was

I wrong? Time will show. To act differently would have been to remove the Pyrenees; France, and history, would have blamed me, and rightly so. After all, why is Europe so much upset? Did not France, England and Holland partition Spain in the lifetime of Don Carlos?¹ And did that first experiment in modern diplomacy find such bitter critics? Did the odium of that partition, which must have descended on a first example, prevent others of the same kind? Did not Poland undergo this stern treatment? Were the Poles summoned, like the Junta of Bayonne, to provide a constitution and choose a sovereign for the country? When Louis XIV later procured for the House of Bourbon the heritage of Charles V from one of that monarch's heirs, what an outcry! It was, indeed, far more surprising! After fighting for ten years, the question was settled by a battle.² This affair will not drag on so long.

"In politics everything is built and based upon the interest of peoples, on the need of public peace, on the requisite balance of States. No doubt everyone will explain these big words in his own way; but who can argue that I did not act in the interest of France, and even in that of Spain? They may allege that, in politics, only a fool lacks good reasons? But in this case the fools, like the clever ones who are honest, will be forced to agree that I did what was called for, in the position forced upon that unhappy country by the intrigues of the Court of Madrid."

I also spoke to the Emperor of the system he was following, his position in Germany, his conduct towards Prussia, the occupation of the Oder strongholds, and finally of the development which the French system, since Tilsit, had assumed in Germany. I told him frankly that each State believed herself threatened, that fear kept the smaller States silent, but that Austria, in point of fact, was taking up arms only because of the fear which she, like everybody, felt. The diversion offered by Spanish affairs doubtless seemed to her to offer the only, and the last, movement left for a defence of her

¹ Treaty of The Hague, October 11, 1698.

² Denain, July 24, 1712.

independence, and the war which she threatened could only be a war of desperation, given her actual condition and her isolation after so many defeats.

"What is my aim believed to be, then?" the Emperor asked me.—"To rule single-handed," I replied.—"But France is large enough! What can I want? Haven't I enough with my Spanish affairs, with the war against England?"—"Doubtless there would be more than enough to occupy any man except Your Majesty. But the presence of your armies in Germany, your resolve to hold the positions on the Oder—everything leads people to believe, as I admit to Your Majesty I am myself convinced, that you have other projects and that your ambition is not satisfied."

The Emperor joked about the ambition attributed to him. He sought to connect this notion with the Spanish war, which he was at pains to justify. He spoke of the follies of the King of Spain, and the infamous conduct of the Prince of the Asturias, of the previous war with Austria, and of the war with which that Power was at the moment threatening him, as of wars made against his defending person which, indeed, it had really been in his own interest to try to avoid. He said that he had been drawn despite himself into the course which Spanish affairs had taken. He deplored what he called the stupidity of the Grand Duke of Berg;¹ it could only be compared, he said, to that of the King of Spain, of the Prince of the Asturias, and of their counsellors. He agreed that it was a troublesome affair, but added that its prevention had not depended on himself.

"From a simple matter which time would have settled, there has emerged one which complicates all other questions, and thwarts me much more than is thought. I could not make allowance in my calculations for all the outcome of the feebleness, stupidity, cowardice and bad faith of these Spanish princes."

He presented in a reassuring light the departure of the troops who were being withdrawn from Germany. "People are pleased," I replied, "to see their numbers lessened, but

¹ Murat, Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom of Spain since May 2, 1808.

there still remain too many for that withdrawal to be a proof that Your Majesty has changed his system. They do not take into account things dictated by necessity. . . ."

This consideration made him laugh. He reverted more than once to Spanish affairs, to the hostility of Austria, to the ambition which, he said, made that power come forward at that particular moment because she believed him to be in difficulties on account of the Spanish insurrection.

"At one moment," he said to me, "I thought that the Emperor of Austria would turn up here. Even in his own interests, that would have been his best possible course of action. Mutual explanation could have been made. . . ."

I pointed out to the Emperor that it was said that he had not been invited to the interview, of which he had only learned through the gazette.

"What does that matter, when one has determination and knows one's own will? But they don't know that in Vienna! Their government only wants to cause anxiety, and the result is armament, threats, expenditure of money, bad temper, and in the end—gunfire. No doubt, I am just as pleased that the Emperor of Austria should have stayed at home, for I should have had two opponents to argue with here instead of one; but he did not come because he is making ready for war, and he could not have explained his armaments. It is always embarrassing for a sovereign to tell lies face to face. He chose to leave that task to Baron Vincent, who, in any case, will not have to complain of my indiscreet questions, because I know what to confine myself to.¹ Are you certain," the Emperor asked me, "that Vincent's arrival here is not a concerted step made with Rumiantsof, that there is no arrangement between them, in fact, that it is not an opening for some proposals or projects for Prussia?"

¹ Baron Vincent had reached Erfurt on September 28th, bringing affectionate and specious letters from the Emperor of Austria for Napoleon and Alexander. Napoleon received him in audience on that date. "On the day after the first conferences a despatch from General Andréossy, our Ambassador in Vienna, was handed to Napoleon. Following on Baron Vincent's heels, it made it plain that Austria was contradicting by her behaviour the declarations of her representative and was avowing her irreconcilable temper."—A. Vandal: *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 429.

This idea seemed to cause the Emperor much concern. I assured him that his doubts were ill-founded, that the Russians had actually been surprised to see Baron Vincent there, that the governments for the moment were piqued rather than trustful, and that, as regards Prussia, the Russians would assuredly take keen interest in her fate, as was necessitated by their own situation.

"Alexander's primary interest," the Emperor resumed, "is that peace should be made with England. If the Emperor of Austria had come here, his presence would have had the advantage of lending more weight to the steps we shall take with regard to the London government. But, with his own plans, it cannot be suitable for him to undertake pledges against those who, no doubt, will soon be his paymasters. . ."

I told the Emperor that the abduction of Ferdinand had made such an impression in Europe that, in Vienna as in Petersburg,¹ it had actually been feared that he might play a base trick on the sovereigns who proceeded to Erfurt.

"Bah! Do you believe that?" said the Emperor. "It was a different motive that held back the Emperor of Austria from coming. He sent Vincent to sound Alexander's intentions, to make certain whether he was staunch in the alliance, and whether he could be drawn away from it. We must keep an eye on his moves. The Austrians are not yet ready; their coalition is not yet linked up; so they want to gain time—and I too," he went on emphatically, "I too want to gain time. So we are agreed; this will last as long as it can. . . ."

The Emperor's refrain was that, if Alexander were his friend, Russia ought to march frankly by his side and make common cause against Austria, without involving herself with Germany, and still less with Spain.

In his last conversations the Emperor put forward justifications for his views of moderation and of peace for Germany. He even showed much anxiety to soothe Austria, and to find a means of doing so. My reflections, which he smilingly referred to as criticism, led him to remark:

¹ Cf. A. Vandal: *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 407.

"But what ideas have you? What means would you employ to reassure these good folk who are, as you think, so terrified?"

Frequently the Emperor assumed an air of cordiality which might well have made me think that he had decided to change his system and adopt one of more moderate kind. As he was pressing me this time to speak my mind, and as I have always been ready to make frank avowal of what I believed to be just and in the interest of the Emperor and of my country, I told him that the means I would suggest were to arrange such financial undertakings with Prussia as would make her realize the extent of the sacrifices at the cost of which she would recover her independence and territory, and would guarantee that more would not be asked than had been imposed at Tilsit.

"Withdraw your troops from Germany, Sire," I added. "Keep only one stronghold as a pledge for your revenue, and the world will remain at peace."

I pointed out that Europe was more in need of reassurance than of terrorization; any action of his to check apprehensiveness about his schemes would consolidate his achievements by restoring peace of mind and removing anxiety regarding the future. This political move would be of greater use to him than an army of 100,000 men and ten strongholds on the Oder, and would consequently leave all his forces at his disposal to cover Spain and put an honourable end to the complications in that country before the insurrection there had become an organized movement. I pointed out to him that these troubles were causing bad effects; the prolonged resistance of the Spaniards was a dangerous example in the existing conditions in Europe. My suggestion, I said, might seem a very great sacrifice, but the eventual results would repay his doing so voluntarily, before circumstances possibly became such as to force such action through necessity.

The Emperor was partly in agreement with the justice of my comments, but he referred to them as a system of weakness. He objected that they would lose the fruit of all the sacrifices already made in order to make England bow,

and that it was essential to close every port to the commerce of that Power, so as to compel her recognition of the independence of other flags. I retorted that the armies could be withdrawn and some strongholds evacuated without the removal of customs control; concentration of his strength would increase his power; there would never be any suspicion of weakness attaching to him; and as nobody would have any wish to see him spreading two or three hundred thousand men over Germany, nobody would face that risk for the momentary advantage of resisting the customs system, which it was in his interest to maintain on the coasts.

The Emperor often listened to me with a genial air, but sometimes also with impatience. More than once he told me, though in a joking tone, that I understood nothing of affairs. . . .

"That, Sire, is why I am asking to be replaced."

The Emperor did not take my retort well. He turned on his heel and replied peevishly:

"A man's first duty, Ambassador, is to his country."

On the following evening Duroc came to see me on the Emperor's behalf, to notify me again of his desires regarding myself. He reminded me that he had previously wished to summon me to the Ministry at the time of the organization of the Empire, and recalled what he had been charged to tell me at that period. So, he added, I should not be surprised by the Emperor's present views regarding me; my entry to the Ministry would soothe and satisfy Russian feelings, and bring me back home; and further, the Emperor was giving me the choice of assuming the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or of returning to Petersburg. I declined the Ministry. I recounted my conversations with the Emperor to Duroc, notably that morning's one, and described its conclusion, asking whether he had been told about it. He assured me that he had not; the Emperor had simply complained of my presenting too single a front in my opinions, and had added that, if he was to believe me, Europe would soon be treating him like a small boy.

On the eve of his departure, just when the conference

business was about to be definitely concluded,¹ the Emperor again sent for me. The conversation took the same lines as previously. He used all the fascination of his genius, all his available powers of persuasion, to bring me to his way of thinking. He expressed his confidence in me, and told me that I could be of more use to him than anybody else could, that I would reap my reward when the occasion came. To induce me to go to Petersburg he said everything that could possibly appeal to the feelings of a loyal subject. My choice was not in doubt; I believed I could be of service there, and the qualities of the Tsar Alexander had attached me to him.

Hitherto I have spoken only of my conversations with the Emperor, and therefore only of what was pertinent to myself. But I was not unacquainted with what had happened at the Congress of Erfurt, and I should therefore revert to the developments there; but for the reader's proper comprehension, matters should be approached on a wider basis, and the general political situation of each State at this time should first be set forth.

The Conference of Erfurt, to outward appearance, had one common object—the measures to be concerted to force England to make peace (the outcome of what was called the underlying idea of Tilsit), the desire that the sovereigns should be agreed amongst themselves and meet personally every year; the interview marked a period, as it was the prelude to the meetings of the crowned heads who have ruled Europe since 1814. . . . Is that memory of Tilsit the only one which has survived the great man who conceived it?

So much had happened in Europe since Tilsit, and the interests of the world had, in certain respects, been so much compromised, that everyone who appeared there was obliged to be masking his difficulties, his anxieties, or his secret schemes for the future, as well as bringing his wishes for that general peace which alone could put Europe back on sounder foundations and repair all breaches.

The Spanish troubles, instead of regenerating that country

¹ That is, on October 13th, as Napoleon and Alexander left Erfurt on October 14th. The Convention of Erfurt was signed on October 12th.

and increasing the Emperor Napoleon's preponderance, as he flattered himself would happen, had resulted only in a variety of difficulties.

Austria, viewing that war and the treatment of the Spanish dynasty as an attack on the independence of all the old-established dynasties, was preparing to take up arms, believing that the subjugation of Spain meant her own ruin. That moment, she felt, was her last chance of safety, and offered therefore a politic and advantageous diversion dictated by the need of her self-preservation. These views, though still only a project, could not escape the vigilance of the Emperor Napoleon, and for the moment embarrassed him.

European, and even French, opinion had greeted the Spanish affairs as a political attack on a feeble, credulous and clumsy ally. The course of events was obscure, and could be explained only in a hostile sense, and blaming voices were joined by those which argued that this new war would mean further delays in making peace with England, the goal of all desires, as this war was the pretext for every sacrifice. This being so, it was important for the Emperor Napoleon to impress public opinion by his complete agreement with Russia, an agreement which, on the one hand, must be made to impress Austria and induce less hostile feelings in England, and on the other hand appear to the public to be a token of submission to external events. This submission was useful at a moment when discontent was everywhere being fortified by our reverses. Opinion would surely be swung round in the Emperor's favour if Europe could be shown that England was alone in her refusal of peace and was prolonging this hateful system of the extermination of the continental States. To reach this goal, steps must be taken to show from which side refusal came; and to invest these steps with high significance, an interview was necessary.

As affairs in Spain had turned out badly, and the war in that country was not advancing matters, the Emperor, obliged to ransack his coffers, was in a hurry to put an end to it. Forced to raise fresh levies, and even to transfer to Spain the greater portion of his armies in Germany, he could only

maintain his influence here by means of the strongholds and such territory as he would continue to occupy there. It was so much in Russia's interest to see the French troops moving further away from her frontiers, and, consequently, to see the friendly security of Prussia evacuated, that this moment made a prolonged occupation of the Prussian strongholds a delicate question to negotiate.¹ Only the Emperor could grant at that moment what circumstances might demand, and even abandon his Spanish projects if these reverses and the example of Austria made Russia hesitate. What ascendancy other than that of his genius, his glory, and his great political schemes could have secured an outcome so contrary to Russian interests? Who could have attempted it without dread of perturbing that cabinet, and even of detaching it from the alliance at a moment when its assistance was so greatly needed? It was under the sway of these wide considerations that the Emperor arrived at Erfurt.

In going there the Tsar of Russia likewise had more than one aim in view, for his difficulties were several. The journey was a fulfilment of the pledge taken at Tilsit. To a prince of his character, a promise given is ever a duty. Besides, more than one consideration drew him to the meeting. First and foremost was his interest in hastening by any means a peace with England, whose warfare was ruining his internal trade and killing his exchange. He also wished not to be hurried to evacuate the Danubian provinces still occupied by his troops (the Treaty of Tilsit allowed him to occupy them only for a time limited to the peace with the Turks and the evacuation of a part of Prussia by France).² The second, concerning him no less closely as it affected the vanity of a nation, and therefore his personal self-respect, was to prevent it being repeated in Moscow that the peace of Tilsit and the alliance had imposed upon Russia nothing but sacrifices. He also desired to obtain the evacuation of some of the fortified points and of the territory of Prussia, a reduction in her

¹ By Article 4 of the Treaty of Tilsit, Napoleon had pledged himself to restore to Prussia the "country towns and territories" designated in the text, "in consideration for H.M. the Emperor of All the Russias."

² Articles 22 and 24 of the peace treaty of July 7, 1807.

tribute and facilities for its payment, and also such arrangements as would enable that Power really to throw off the yoke and recover her full independence, an important question, and one of personal safety, for Russia herself.

Russia was silent concerning affairs in Spain, which the Tsar indeed expounded in his discussions with goodwill rather than irritation as regards his ally, because he was acquainted with all its details. Nor was he displeased that the Emperor's warlike ardours should find vent in the Peninsula. In politics many things are explained and made valid by interest. The interest which England had in wresting that country from our influence and in saving Portugal was in his eyes a powerful instrument for inducing her to make peace. From this point of view the course of events was therefore serving the interests of Russia as well as our own. As peace with England was the sole means of ensuring the peace of the whole world, Russian policy in these circumstances adapted itself admirably, inasmuch as the secret explanation of its meaning was perhaps less favourable. Such were the views which the Petersburg cabinet brought to Erfurt.

Austria showed all the more irritation at not having been introduced to these plans for a meeting, as she could not take a fresh line on the motive for this silence, and as this quite plausible pretext for discontent served her secret schemes. The Emperor Napoleon had doubtless been little concerned at the non-arrival of the Emperor Francis to take part in the negotiations at Erfurt. He felt that his contact with the monarch from the North would be certain to re-establish relations which a community of wide interests could only have weakened and ought to be instantly linked up again. The interview was kept a secret until the eleventh hour, and Austria did not learn of it until the news was made public; she then hastened to despatch Baron Vincent to Erfurt with a view to sounding the general currents and being to some extent aware of the decisions which would be taken. The awkward ill-temper of his cabinet, and the fear of an indiscretion on the part of the Russians, left his position with regard to them one of reserve, which was further encouraged by the

reserved attitude adopted by Russia in her desire to keep on friendly terms with ourselves; but his reserve rendered so poor a service to European interests, which both parties ought to have been defending, that it did honour to the loyalty of the Tsar Alexander.

As I said before, the intentions disclosed by Austria for some time past were bound to be, and in fact were, more than suspect to the Emperor Napoleon. The appearance of her envoy seemed to him to conceal an existing agreement with Russia; but he was soon reassured, and this unanticipated incident, which ought to have lent strength to the political language of the Petersburg cabinet, had, as will be seen, quite a contrary effect.

Relations between the Emperors were from the start established on the most friendly basis, without etiquette. They visited one another at all hours, chiefly between three o'clock and dinner, which was a standing engagement at the Emperor Napoleon's headquarters. Frequently they met again in the evening, when there was no theatrical performance, or afterwards. The meetings also were generally arranged at the Emperor Napoleon's headquarters. They rode, and reviewed garrison troops and certain corps which were leaving for Spain.

The first days were spent by each in taking soundings, in trying to divine or discover the views and projects of the other. The Emperor Napoleon did not find his ally so easy as at Tilsit, complaining that he had become distrustful. The hostile intentions betrayed by Austria changed the character of the negotiations from the start of the congress, and diverted Russia from its purpose; for the Emperor Napoleon, in a hurry to send his forces from Prussia to Spain, became more pressing to ascertain in advance how far he could count on the alliance and on the assistance of Russia against Austria, and became in consequence more pressing that the Tsar should be more threatening in word and behaviour towards that Power, as this, he urged, was the only way of preventing her from taking up arms; and the result of this was that the Russian cabinet, regarding the demonstrations demanded

AUSTRIA

of them as a means of forcing a climax, tended to stand aloof from him. Whence arose lively arguments which held up the progress of other business. For some time everything was subordinated to this question. There were even reproaches uttered, to the effect that these misunderstood gestures of friendship, leaving Austrian threats unpunished, were robbing the alliance of its usefulness and offering England a proof that she could still find allies on the Continent and so avoid the necessity of entering the peace negotiations which were to be proposed to her.

The Tsar was unshakable. Nothing could alter his resolve. He refused to see in the arguments and insistence of his ally anything but a proof of the hostile intentions and schemes of revenge of which he suspected him. The interests of Prussia and other questions had difficulty in receiving attention amidst these serious arguments. Time was passing. No progress was being made. Ministers were unable to advance the progress of matters in which the sovereigns had reserved the control, and even the details, for themselves.

After a week each of them was still testing the ground, trying to discover how far the claims of his adversary extended, without being able completely to penetrate them. They watched each other, hoping that the morrow would bring the solution of all problems. The Emperor Napoleon was still taking the utmost pains to obtain pledges which would bind Austria. At that price, whatever his desire to keep everything in Germany, he would perhaps have rested content, on the principle of retaining only one stronghold on the Oder as a safeguard for his tribute. He would then have withdrawn the balance of his troops.

More politic than his opponent, he had more or less resigned himself to this sacrifice, when he observed the Tsar Alexander's insistence from the first on securing the evacuation of the strongholds and a part of Prussia; but the question of Austria, which in principle was only accessory, had now, through the importance attached to it by both parties, become the principal question, and the negotiations shifted their

ground. Russia was diverted from her first aim. Everything was subordinated to the fear of seeing the peace with Austria broken. The Emperor Napoleon retained the fortresses to which he clung. Russia believed that she had served the interests of Europe, even at the cost of her own, and that she had gained everything by taking only a conditional pledge, which, according to her, could not compromise Austria and the peace of Europe,¹ since it resulted in the French armies being flung into Spain, where the Emperor Napoleon would be occupied for a long time. She was afraid that too much insistence on the evacuation of the fortresses might prevent the departure of the troops and draw the political attention of the conqueror upon Germany, just when Austria was already fixing too much; she believed that by forcing the storm to a safe distance it would pass, and that the course and requirements of this Spanish war would within a few months bring about the evacuation which, in her view, was the most important outcome for assuring universal tranquillity in the future.

Confidence, as I have already said, was undermined by Austria's clumsy dissimulation. The politics of that period would have been aided by open advances to the Tsar Alexander, and by the display of large and generous views regarding the fate of Prussia. But Austria, so threatening and so heavily hostile, and with her mind already made up for war, could not take advantage of the circumstances; she appeared to be thinking only of herself, and to be proceeding with regard only to Spain, which, in the pressing and existing danger of Prussia, seemed to Russia to be a very remote interest; and Russia, indeed, probably witnessed with some secret satisfaction the spectacle of French troops being summoned away for employment in the southern extremities of Europe.

This clumsy tendency of the Austrian cabinet was injurious to all the business in hand. Baron Vincent, however, was pleased with his mission, or ought to have been, as he was able to make sure that the Tsar Alexander was independently

¹ Article 10 of the Convention of Erfurt.

showing his detachment from any pledges which might produce aggressive action against Austria, and that he was even declaring boldly against being led into any attack on that Power. I do not know whether he was, or was not, aware of the eventual clause of co-operation and consent given by France in order that Russia should, if possible, secure the cession of Wallachia and Moldavia.¹ On the day of my departure I was assured by someone that he had had wind of this arrangement, and appeared to be highly displeased, as if the dangers of Austria and Europe in the existing situation of the world could possibly at that moment be in Turkey, should Russia in any case be successful.² The Tsar, who had put up a long resistance on the Austrian question, and believing that he had provided for the greatest political interests of the moment by undertaking only eventual pledges, afterwards gave his entire attention to what was of most particular interest to himself.

Like the ministers and the Court, the sovereigns themselves began to grow weary, and tired of this play-acting existence, and especially of these quite inconclusive discussions. Sharp words often passed between the Emperors. Napoleon, in turn dexterous, conciliatory and charming, and occasionally insistent too, saw that he could obtain nothing from his ally, who remained constantly within the circle he had traced for himself. On two occasions he tried anger. As these means had not in the least altered Alexander's resolves, and as his outbursts were more of a diplomatic trick than genuine fury, his anger quickly cooled down and he reverted to more conciliatory terms.

In the end he contented himself with what he had obtained, which in fact was much more than what he had believed he could hope for at the outset. At heart he was highly pleased, in the state of affairs resulting from the affairs of Spain, at having tinged the interior of the alliance with a marked anti-English colour, by the proposal agreed upon and to be put forward to propose peace to England. It was

¹ Articles 8 and 9 of the Convention.

² See A. Vandal: *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 494.

agreed that the sovereigns should write to the King of England; that M. Rumiantsof should come to Paris; that a wide political move should be made. And this was what the Emperor Napoleon desired, as indeed, I repeat, he should desire, as it offered proof of the unity of the allies, distracted attention from Spain, and threw the whole odium of the war upon England: for it could readily be foreseen, from then onwards, that the complication of Spanish affairs, advantageous to England through the insurrection of the Spaniards, would render these proposals useless.¹ This agreement between the two Emperors also kept Austria heedful and obliged her to postpone her schemes.

The imminent need of Sweden to enter the Continental System, the only weapon possible against England, completed the checked measures of Tilsit, and was a result of the position in which Europe was placed by the egotism of England and the unrelenting war policy of Mr. Pitt. A far-sighted policy was doubtless called for to deliver Sweden, and consequently Finland,² to the ambition of her powerful neighbour, but such was the force of circumstances.

The efficacy of the Continental System depended entirely on its universal application. To leave an outlet for English products in the North meant the paralysing of all other measures, and made illusory all the sacrifices already offered. Inability to close the gates of Turkey had flooded Southern Germany and Poland, and the drawbacks of this were already all too perceptible. What scruples was the Emperor Napoleon to entertain? Could he reasonably admit that Sweden, who would be left the choice of closing her ports to the English or of being exposed to a war with Russia and France, would prefer these real and imminent dangers to the momentary inconveniences of a commercial embarrassment which, in any case, had been adopted by the whole Continent, and submitted to even by Austria, notwithstanding her hostile frame of mind? Admitting that the King's exasperation

¹ Articles 1 to 3 of the Convention.

² Article 5 imposed, as an absolute condition of eventual peace with England, the recognition of Russian dominion in Finland.

would push matters to an extremity, did the Emperor, even in that supposition, owe more consideration to Sweden, at this time his avowed enemy, than had formerly been shown to her by England, her ally? Was it reasonable to suppose that the Stockholm cabinet, which, in consequence of an undertaking signed on December 3, 1804,¹ had armed, taken the field, and compromised itself with regard to France and Russia to safeguard Hanover for England, would not sacrifice itself for that Power which, forty-six days after obtaining this sound and loyal service, had trafficked in its mortal remains? Mr. Pitt had made Russia an offer of Finland, along with Wallachia and Moldavia, in order to persuade her to what was styled a "treaty of concert," which formed the third coalition.² England had given this unparalleled example of the betrayal by a great State of a weak one, and had at the same time betrayed the Porte, whose old and loyal friend she proclaimed herself: how could she inspire Sweden with blind devotion?

Indeed, the annals of diplomacy offer nothing to match this conduct on the part of England; and a still greater outrage upon Europe lies in the fact that all these intrigues took place in the train of the proposals made by the Tuileries cabinet, which, in the general situation at that time, were more than ever capable of ending the woes, the misery and the dangers of stricken Europe if the London cabinet had cherished any thoughts beyond those of purely selfish advantage.

The French cabinet, against which there was so much outcry, and against which the whole of Europe took up arms, followed a totally different line of conduct, despite the fact that a major interest might well have afforded it an excuse, when in 1812 it refused Sweden to appropriate Norway at

¹ Secret convention between His Britannic Majesty and the King of Sweden, signed at Stockholm on December 3, 1804 (Martens: *Recueil des traités*, Supp. IV, 158). This convention was also published in the *Moniteur Universel*, 1806, No. 46. In return for £80,000 per annum, Gustavus IV put the port of Åland and the island of Rügen at the disposal of the English.

² Treaty between Russia and England of April 11, 1805, to which Austria adhered on August 9th. Cf. Martens: *Recueil des traités*, II, 433. The proposal had been put forward by England on January 19, 1805.

the expense of Denmark, an ally of France.¹ At that moment the Russian war was close at hand. The Emperor knew that his refusal would fling Sweden into the arms of Russia. But nothing could induce him to sacrifice the interests of an ally who had shown him fidelity.

Before returning to events at Erfurt, I think I should go further with some details of that "treaty of concert"; it was noteworthy as revealing the foundations which England thenceforward believed it advantageous to establish, and which later she was to force upon Europe in the pacification of 1814. This treaty, the outcome of the overtures and offers put forward on January 19th, was signed at Petersburg on April 11th. One article of the treaty promised to Russia Finland, Wallachia and Moldavia. The others stipulated the independence of Holland, united to the Netherlands, the independence of Switzerland, the restoration of the King of Sardinia in Piedmont with extended territories, the evacuation of Italy, Naples to be given to the House of Bourbon, and finally what was termed a European status guaranteeing the independence of all States and forming a barrier against future usurpations.

As I re-read my notes to-day for the co-ordination of my memoirs, I cannot find myself writing of this date without my mind turning to a later date (April 11, 1814, the Treaty of Fontainebleau), which concluded high destinies and provided the means of fulfilling that plan which until then had doubtless seemed only a dream fashioned in 1805.

I return to Erfurt. As circumstances demanded that Sweden should make common cause with the Continent at large, it is obvious that Russia alone, by reason of her situation, should be entrusted with the duty of compelling her. In the Emperor's position at that moment, it was impossible for him to entertain hopes that she would take up arms without

¹ Through the medium of the consul Signeul, in May 1812, Bernadotte offered to side with the French alliance and against Russia, on condition that he received Norway, which was to be taken from the Danes. The latter were to be compensated with Swedish Pomerania and a sum of twelve millions. Napoleon rejected the proposals with scorn. Cf. *Souvenirs d'un officier polonais* (Brandt), p. 341.

demanding all the advantages to which circumstances enabled her to lay claim. Even in the general interest of the cause, he could not offer her less than England had suggested to her for her own advantages. Further, in this part of the general negotiation, there was the particular fact that Russia made herself be implored and urged to undertake engagements against Sweden, and even, still later, to wage and prosecute that war. The secret of this moderation lay, no doubt, less in some family relationships which it was desirable to handle with seeming circumspection, than in the certainty that the Emperor Napoleon would so far insistently press upon Russia to ensure that such handling would not prejudicially affect his interests.

It has often been wondered what the circumstances were which made possible the founding, at Tilsit, of an alliance, an intimacy so contrary to the political direction hitherto pursued by Russia and France: my remarks about England go far to explain this change, and the facilities which the Emperor Napoleon found at Tilsit to bring the Tsar Alexander to adopt his system. The impressions made upon the latter sovereign by the offers and pretensions of the London cabinet, as well as the conduct of the latter towards their allies, could not redound to their advantage. Their co-operation, always belated, had spoilt this campaign as well as the previous one. Russia, victimized like so many others by the trust which she had placed in them, was in a position to blame them for a third of the reverses which she suffered. The selfishness of the English cabinet penetrated all their actions as it did their words. In the event of victory the needed guineas would nevertheless have settled everything. But in defeat they could work no repair, and with a sovereign of Alexander's character, if he was to remain friendly with the ally of whom he had reason to complain, it was essential that he could at least weigh his conduct and do justice to his intentions. Here, bad faith was manifest. The completely selfish views of England were glaringly obvious. And so the Russian cabinet believed that they were honestly freed from any obligation of consideration towards the Power which had

shown none to anyone else. This frame of mind, unchanged since Tilsit, was clearly serving us admirably, and it would have lasted for a long time if the Emperor Napoleon had been able to retain the system which he had apparently adopted.

At Erfurt, the negotiations, although not altogether attaining their end, were taking the direction which might possibly suit the Emperor Napoleon. Convinced at last that he would not alter the fixed convictions of the Tsar, and that he would not induce him to go further than a pledge to act only in the event of Austria being the first to attack, he resigned himself to being satisfied with this.¹ This made it easier to reach agreement on the other points, because the Tsar Alexander imagined that he had gained everything, as he maintained that Austria would never be so foolish as to make herself the aggressor and enter the lists alone. As the Austrian question, the source of so much dispute, had virtually over-ridden that of the evacuation of the Oder fortresses and that of Prussia, everything was made easy, and the Emperor, proud of having yielded nothing and strong in his German position by reason of the still occupied strongholds, which, in token of the perfect agreement between the chief allies, would necessarily exert influence on Austria as on Europe at large, was able, as he desired, to make use of his forces for Spain. At that moment he flattered himself that he would bring Spain to submission in one campaign, and that it would only be necessary to leave there a few garrisons and three small supervisory corps. Trusting in the promises of his ally, he started on the movement of French troops towards the Peninsula before all the questions were finally settled, and some of the regiments making for Spain marched through Erfurt.

To retain the Oder fortresses was, in the Emperor's situation, a primary concern, because, with ordinary garrisons, he upheld his position in Prussia and sustained his political and military influence in the eyes of Germany. Another great advantage of that occupation, and the one which he valued highest at that moment, was that it gave him the

¹ Clause 10 of the Convention of Erfurt.

nucleus of an army on the flank of Austria. The Swedish and Turkish questions were settled in turn, and in the end Russia was content, as regards Prussia, with some compounding arrangements and the remission of several millions, which fundamentally counted for nothing as she did not regain either political or territorial independence. Moreover, these financial questions were dealt with only at the last moment, when there was so much weariness with the congress that nobody cared about anything except going away. Russia had in view the prospect of obtaining the cession of Moldavia and Wallachia, and even of acquiring Finland. These considerations, important no doubt, especially in the position of the Tsar Alexander with relation to his own nation, coupled with the consideration which had caused the sacrifice of all interests to what was believed to be the salvation of Austria, overshadowed the inevitable later consequences of the armed French occupation of fortified towns in the heart of Germany.

The Emperor Napoleon was able to transfer part of his armies to Spain, and to go thither in person, without thereby yielding any of his occupation or remitting anything of what was due to him. On both counts therefore there was a measure of satisfaction. Austria, who had threatened the Emperor Napoleon when he was in Spain, was in her turn menaced by Russia if she took the initiative in war. The Emperor Napoleon clearly had not wasted his time. Unquestionably, in return for her compliance, he was offering Russia several tempting opportunities to satisfy her ambitions; but at a cost of two wars, of which, though one might be expected to realize this object, the other, with England, was likely to turn out to be a costly undertaking; and neither of which was really to her interest at that particular moment. She had even to face the possibility of a third war if Sweden refused to enter the Continental System. Thus it looked as if Russia would have her hands as full as we could wish, and as we would have ours in Spain. She had, moreover, the added embarrassment of being a country rich in products but without any means of exporting them. Wallachia and

Moldavia, which she hoped to seize from the Turks, might be relied on to occupy her attentions for some considerable time; and the continuance of the war with England, whose effect was to close all outlets for her commerce, would probably create plenty of domestic difficulties. The war against Sweden, the prize of which was to be Finland, was the real recompense for her sacrifices; and in truth Russia had no cause to haggle over the price of so valuable an acquisition, on the very threshold of her capital, since this unique opportunity to realize the aspirations of Alexander's predecessors might not recur. But was it a time to jeopardize, for the sake of such personal advantages, general interests that seemed at once more urgent, and, in view of the growing power of France, more important? Was it not possible, and even necessary, to reconcile these interests with the interests of Prussia and Germany, when the whole future tranquillity of the world depended on such a reconciliation? The question was of fundamental importance.

Those who did not follow the discussions while they were actually in progress, and so are not privy to the various considerations which prevented them from having a more satisfactory outcome, will blame the Petersburg Government for not having played its cards better. They will reproach it with having sacrificed general interests to considerations of only immediate significance. It is for history to judge; my duty, as I view it, is to estimate the achievements of the Erfurt Conference, and, in the interests of truth, to explain the considerations which made Russia subscribe to the convention resulting from it. The change of policy in Russia after Tilsit shocked the opinions and interfered with the habits of the nobility. Lack of imports brought ruin to the country; commercial difficulties and a falling rate of exchange led to internal disaffection, and solid opposition to the Government's policy showed itself. All these considerations made it essential for the Tsar Alexander at all costs to obtain, from the Erfurt conversations, results which would stimulate his people's enthusiasm and rally them in favour of his policy. It was necessary to justify in their eyes, not only the alliance,

THE CONGRESS OF ERFURT

but also the war with England and the meeting itself. This object was achieved. There had been considerable opposition to the meeting in Petersburg. The Imperial family, the nobles, even the middle classes, were solidly against the project. The fate of the Spanish princes at Bayonne suggested dangerous possibilities; and everyone begged the Emperor not to leave Russia. Supplications, tears, argument—every means was used to dissuade him. It was pointed out that, by exposing his person to danger, he jeopardized the security of the State, that the Emperor Napoleon's motive in inviting him to a meeting on territory under his control, and in the midst of his troops, was to take him captive and hold him as a hostage, that if a meeting was absolutely essential it should take place as in the case of Tilsit, at the extremity of the two frontiers. The Tsar indignantly repulsed these suggestions and set off for Erfurt.

Although it was an act of condescension on their part, all the German rulers came to Erfurt in order to ingratiate themselves with the allied Powers and to form, in some sort, their court. These attentions were not greatly appreciated, since they led to much waste of time, and prevented the allied Powers from discussing their affairs over dinner, at which meal most of them met daily. The German rulers, even the kings, were so inconspicuous, and behaved towards us in so familiar a manner if we happened to forget what was due to them, that the position was often embarrassing. Apart from when they were hoping to make their homage acceptable to the master of the world, their main object appeared to be to efface themselves. Princess Stéphanie of Baden was much sought after, and was often entertained by her brother-in-law the Tsar.¹ Her charm, her intelligence, the distinction of her manners, charmed everyone. The Tsar Alexander was pleased often to praise them, and repeated this praise even afterwards in Petersburg.

¹ Stéphanie de Beauharnais, daughter of Count Claude de Beauharnais, cousin-germane of Queen Hortense and adopted daughter of Napoleon I, had married on April 8, 1806, Charles, hereditary prince of Baden, who became Grand Duke on June 10, 1811, and was the brother of the Empress Elizabeth Alexievna (Louise-Marie-Auguste of Baden), wife of Alexander I.

The Emperor Napoleon took command of the ceremonial of the congress, like a sovereign in his own capital. Everything took place in the best possible style. But I doubt whether the princes who came to pay court left satisfied. Their presence was doubtless flattering, but was often really embarrassing, as they must sometimes have noticed for themselves. Besides, these sovereigns found themselves treated rather as Austria had formerly treated her electors, and they may well have discovered that although their new title had freed them from their former functions, it had in no way altered their position with regard to their protector.

Since the Emperor had arranged for the best tragic pieces to come from Paris, there was a performance almost every day. The Emperors went together; and everything was seized on that could be taken as referring to their august meeting. For instance, the line:

“A great man’s friendship is a boon divine. . . .”

was noticed by the Emperor Alexander himself, and used as a means of paying a most graceful public homage to his ally.¹

The Emperors parted² fairly well satisfied with the arrangements they had made, but at heart mutually displeased. The illusions of Tilsit had vanished, and there was deep mutual distrust, but the desire to maintain the alliance as a means of inducing England to make peace, and of consolidating the peace of Europe, had been frankly expressed by the Tsar and his ministers; and it was thus possible to continue to work towards this end. In any case Russia’s new interests, the advantages she hoped to gain from the arrangements just concluded, made the alliance for her at once a duty and a necessity.

Matters only took definite shape during the last three days; until then, the Foreign Minister³ did not even know the Emperor’s whole mind. It was only at the very moment

¹ Voltaire’s *Œdipe*, Act I, scene i., spoken by Philoctète. This performance took place on October 4, 1808.

² October 14, 1808.

³ Champagny, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

of signing the Convention that he had his final instructions. Each day brought changes. His Majesty proceeded, as it were, from day to day, adjusting his policy, and even his views on what might be expected to further it or to put obstacles in its way. Nor did any of the other parties to the Convention know his position until the last moment. Then, indeed, there was a scramble to finish, as much to avoid fresh incidents as to get away; and everyone turned a deliberately blind eye to the reproaches which he would, perhaps, later deserve.

The Tsar Alexander, who was freely accused at this time of blindness and weakness, showed great character, as was recognized even by the Emperor Napoleon, who often complained of it. If Austria, I say again, had explained herself then as she did later through Prince Schwarzenberg,¹ who argued clumsily only in his manifesto, it is probable that the events of 1811 [1809?] which ended in upsetting the whole of Europe, would never have taken place.

The moment was one of the most favourable for arriving at a real peace, since the position in which the course of events in Spain had placed the Emperor Napoleon inclined him to make sacrifices. He was personally most reluctant to go to Spain, but felt that only his presence could settle matters there, or even bring about any change in the existing situation. More unity on the part of the great Powers, and, on the part of England, a little genuine desire to restore peace to the world, without sacrificing her legitimate advantages, and an understanding would have been reached. France would again have taken her place in the political system most suitable to her circumstances, which was her due by virtue of her power and renown. As far as I could judge at the time, the Emperor's main object was peace. It is true that he wanted to be able to dispose of his troops in order to send them to Spain; but so long as England refused to negotiate, there was no other way of finding an honourable solution to his difficulties in that country. As to the rigid maintenance of the Continental System—it followed naturally from the same line of reasoning.

¹ Prince Schwarzenberg's mission to Petersburg, February 1809.

To make peace before Russia had been able to reap the advantages which the latest arrangements offered her would have suited his policy admirably, and was, in his eyes, a real compensation for the sacrifices he made. He was unyielding in the matter of the indemnity to be paid by Prussia; but Russia recognized that this claim was legitimate, and limited her activities, so far as it was concerned, to persuading him to forgo it. The difficulty, in any case, would not have arisen immediately, and then only in regard to the guarantees that were to be offered, about which agreement could be reached. The Emperor appeared to be genuinely reconciled to making considerable concessions for the sake of attaining a general peace; and the essential thing, therefore, was to make the best use of this frame of mind. The negotiations would inevitably have brought every question under review, each Power having to take account of its neighbour. There can be no doubt that the great common interest of opening out better prospects for the future peace of the world would have overshadowed all the separate ambitions of the negotiating Powers.

The threats of Austria, I repeat, far from giving support to the policy which it was in Russia's interest, and intention, to uphold, thwarted and upset all her plans and only served to further ours. "Can I evacuate the fortresses on the Oder, give up my whole position in Prussia? In fact, weaken myself in Germany?" the Emperor asked the Tsar, and with reason. "And this at a moment when, taking advantage of my difficulties in Spain, Austria threatens me? Is it not in the interest of the alliance that, just when we are going to make a drive to force a peace on England, we should appear united, and I strong, in the eyes of our common enemy and of an Austria inclined to become also an enemy? England's wish to bring to an end this occupation of Prussia, as well as of Spain, will give us one more concession to offer her, and therefore one more tool for achieving peace. Is my ally, my friend, seriously prepared to suggest that I should abandon the only position from which I can threaten the Austrian flank in the event of her attacking me whilst my

RESULTS

troops are in the South of Europe and four hundred leagues from France? What I was prepared to do four months ago, I cannot undertake to do to-day. What would then have furthered the interests of Prussia, and therefore the interests of the alliance, would now be contrary to our objective. The continued stay of a certain number of troops in Prussia, when I am withdrawing all my forces from Germany to send them into the Peninsula, cannot concern Russia. Their withdrawal proves my confidence in you. Will you not, then, trust me? Do not allow baseless fears to destroy the fruits of our agreement, which, at a moment when we urgently need to show ourselves united and strong, is itself the reason for my warlike attitude. If you insist, of course, I have no alternative but to agree; but in that case I should prefer to withdraw from Spain and settle my quarrel with Austria at once. If I am to evacuate the fortresses on the Oder, you ought to evacuate the Danube fortresses. It is in your interest to hold them, since you are bound to obtain Wallachia and Moldavia. When the Porte realizes that intervention on my part is out of the question, it will rush to accept whatever conditions you care to dictate. Thus the occupation of Prussia, which I wish to prolong, is even more in your interest than in mine. In course of time you will reap the advantage, whilst I shall gain nothing."

Such were the lines of reasoning induced by Austria's appearance and behaviour at Erfurt. As to the consequences, the French troops remained in Prussia and the Russian troops in Wallachia. In point of fact Austria, upset just those arrangements towards whose conclusion she might have been expected, in theory, to contribute.

Let me revert to the conversations of the two Emperors, which were, as I have already said, sometimes more than a little animated. On one occasion, for instance, Napoleon, unable to have his own way with the Tsar Alexander (they were discussing the Austrian question), tried the experiment of working himself up into a rage, and, losing control of himself, threw his hat (I think it was) on the ground and stamped on it. The Tsar Alexander stood still (I should

point out that the two monarchs nearly always walked up and down the Emperor's study while they talked), and, looking at him with a smile, said, when he had calmed down a little, as he did almost at once: "When you become violent I just become stubborn. With me anger is of no avail. Let us discuss, and be reasonable, or I go." As he spoke he moved towards the door, and would have acted on his words if the Emperor Napoleon had not hurried forward to stop him. They resumed their conversation calmly, and the Emperor Napoleon gave way. A similar but less violent incident occurred in connection with the question of Prussia, since, as the Emperor remarked to me more than once, the Tsar became every day more obstinately settled in his purposes.

These details were given me by the Emperor Napoleon. "Your friend the Tsar," he said, "is mulish. He's deaf to what he doesn't want to hear. This wretched business in Spain is costing me a pretty penny!" The Emperor, who on that particular day was very confidential, and even kindly, with me, spoke afterwards about the overtures which he hoped to receive from the Tsar Alexander as *friendly advice* and as a *mark of interest*, in regard to the desirability of his *marrying again*, and the *need* for him to have children in order to *consolidate his work* and *found a dynasty*. The Emperor wanted M. de Talleyrand or myself to broach the matter with the Tsar, making it appear that we were personally in favour of the project, and that it was in the general interest as much as in our own, since it would secure our future and, at the same time, cool the Emperor's bellicose temper and make him more inclined to stay in France; all this was to be done, of course, with suitable circumspection. M. de Talleyrand had already explained the business to me, and had made me promise to open the subject with the Tsar Alexander.

Noticing probably that what he had said made a painful impression on me, the Emperor Napoleon added: "My object is to find out if Alexander really is a friend, if he takes a real interest in the welfare of France. I love Josephine;

and I shall never be happier than I am now. But from what Alexander says we shall learn the feeling amongst the crowned heads about the possibility of my marrying again. For me it would be a sacrifice; but a sacrifice that my family, Talleyrand, Fouché, demand of me for the sake of France. A son would unquestionably mean greater stability. No one likes my brothers; and they are not very capable. You might perhaps prefer Eugène, as others do, because he's grown-up, and has married a Bavarian princess, and has children; but it would not be to your advantage. Adopted children are not satisfactory for founding new dynasties. I have other plans for him."

The Emperor asked me several questions about the Grand Duchesses, and wished to know what I thought of these princesses. "Only one," I replied, "is of a marriageable age;¹ but remember what happened in the case of the projected Swedish marriage.² They won't agree to a change of religion."

The Emperor replied that he was not thinking of the Grand Duchesses; he had not yet made up his mind, and only wanted to know whether his divorce would be approved by the Russians or would shock them—in short, what were the feelings of the Tsar Alexander about it. I felt that he was hoping that the idea might please the fancy of the Petersburg Government; that it would be, perhaps, a tempting bait to Russia; and that he had decided to govern his conduct by her reactions in the matter.

The Emperor, who might so easily have turned the conversation with his ally on to these paths, was insistent

¹ Alexander had two unmarried sisters. The younger, Anne Pavlowna, born at Petersburg on January 18, 1795, was not yet fourteen years old. She married King William II of Holland on February 21, 1816. The elder, Catherine Pavlowna, was born at Petersburg on May 21, 1788. She was thus twenty years old. She married on August 3, 1809, Duke Frederick-George of Holstein-Oldenburg. Widowed on December 27, 1812, she married a second time on January 24, 1816, her second husband being the Grand Duke Charles-Frederick of Würtemberg.

² A marriage had been planned between the Grand Duchess Marie, eldest daughter of Paul I and sister of Alexander, and Gustavus IV, King of Sweden, who married Princess Frederica-Dorothea of Baden on October 31, 1797. The Grand Duchess Marie married the Grand Duke Charles-Frederick of Saxe-Weimar on August 3, 1804.

that the Tsar should open the question. He doubtless hoped that the subject would be broached so politely and correctly that he would be able later on to find an indirect hint on the part of the Tsar in favour of his sister. I ought to point out, in this respect, that my observations about religion, and about the rejected Swedish marriage, were coldly received. They obviously displeased the Emperor, who shrugged and pulled a face, as though to say that there was no comparison between the Tuileries and Stockholm.

M. de Talleyrand spoke to the Tsar Alexander after I had spoken. It was not difficult to persuade him to speak to the Emperor Napoleon, partly for our own sakes, and partly because the project in question, since it would make for peace, was as much in Europe's interest as in that of France. He did all in his power to oblige us, but confined himself, as he explained to me, to general observations as to what would be the wisest and most far-sighted policy for Napoleon to adopt.

I should point out that the question of a divorce had been very much to the fore a year previously, just when I was leaving for Russia, and that then the Minister of Police had put forward a proposal for a marriage with a Frenchwoman; it met with no favour. The Duke of Otranto was responsible for this idea; and his object was, on the one hand, to sound the Empress Josephine on the question of divorce, and, on the other, to prepare French opinion for such an eventuality.¹

When the Emperor had left, I set off for Weimar and Lobikau² with the Tsar Alexander to visit the Duchess of Courland. In the course of this visit, thanks to the good offices of the Duke of Courland, I arranged for the marriage of his daughter with M. Edmond de Périgord.³ The Duke

¹ Regarding Fouché's intrigues, see *Joséphine Répudiée*, by Frédéric Masson, p. 30, and *Fouché*, by Louis Madelin, II, 61.

² The Duchess of Courland's castle in Saxony. They arrived there on October 16, 1808, at five o'clock in the evening, and left at eleven o'clock. See *Souvenirs de la Duchesse de Dino*, published by her grand-daughter, the Countess Jean de Castellane, p. 226, and *Archives des Affaires Étrangères, Corr. Pol.*, Russia, 147, p. 287.

³ Alexandre-Edmond de Talleyrand-Périgord, later Duke of Dino and Duke of Talleyrand-Périgord, nephew of the Prince of Benevento, born on August 2,

was kind enough to take me in his carriage as far as Leipzig,¹ where I returned to my own carriage and started for Petersburg with one more year there in front of me, assuming that the Emperor kept the promise which he had made to me when we parted.

I shall pass over all the events that took place between the Erfurt Conference and the outbreak of the war with Austria—a war which I had done my utmost to prevent. These and the consequent events will be dealt with elsewhere.

Since the peace with Austria² changed the whole direction of the Emperor's policy, and made apparent its real tendency, revealing his real purposes in regard to Poland and the occupation of Oldenburg,³ and the form that this occupation was to take; since his present policy bore no relation to the intentions which he so frequently proclaimed, everything henceforth conflicted with my previous words and conduct, which I was not prepared to repudiate. I pleaded vigorously for my recall, feeling myself unable to deceive someone who had been so loyal to us when our position was critical in Spain, who had been so frank in his relations, who had so faithfully carried out, to the very letter, every pledge he

1787, accompanied Caulaincourt to the French Embassy in Russia as an attaché. He married on April 22, 1809, at Frankfort-on-Maine, Dorothee de Buren, born on August 21, 1795, daughter of the Duke Peter of Courland and of his third wife, the Countess Anne-Charlotte-Dorothea of Medem. Regarding this marriage, see, apart from the *Souvenirs de la Duchesse de Dino*, Talleyrand's *Mémoires*, II, p. 4.
¹ Before returning to Petersburg, Alexander visited Königsberg, Riga and Libau.

² The Armistice of Znaim July 12, 1809, and the Peace of Vienna October 14, 1809.

³ By the terms of the *senatus consultum* of December 13, 1808, the German coast had been annexed by France. Napoleon offered the Duke Peter-Frederick-Louis of Holstein-Eutin, who acted as the reigning Grand Duke of Oldenburg's regent, and who was Alexander's uncle, the alternatives of either staying where he was and putting up with the restrictions imposed on his sovereignty by the establishment of French Customs, or receiving Erfurt as compensation. The Duke preferred to keep his territory; but Napoleon, by a decree of January 22, 1811, ordered Oldenburg to be taken, thus ignoring Article 12 of the Treaty of Tilsit, which guaranteed the Ducal House in the peaceful possession of its dominions. The French administration, taking its stand on the general terms of the *senatus consultum* of December 13, 1810, had, as a matter of fact, already got control of the Duchy. The Tsar Alexander answered with a written protest, which Champagny refused to accept.

had given. Finding that no amount of insistence would procure my recall, I pleaded illness¹ and, not only directly, but also indirectly through my friends, I made my position so clear to the Emperor and was so emphatic that he had no alternative but to make up his mind to replace me in order to avoid an open rupture; for I had fully resolved at any cost to leave the Embassy.²

As I did not share the senseless prejudices and enthusiasms of the Government, and had no wish to lend myself to the Emperor's policy by providing him with pretexts in justification of his coldness towards, and disapproval of, the Russian Government, my letters naturally displeased him. I had sought in my despatches to avoid anything which might lend itself to false interpretations; and they had therefore failed for some considerable time to give satisfaction. Whenever there was an occasion for doing so, *I paid a deserved tribute to the Russian Government's conduct*, and even stated its grievances, without troubling whether my frankness would pain the Emperor. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Police³ poured special agents into Russia to make trouble, and to try to collect material for a manifesto. They had just started fresh correspondence, not in cipher and sent through

¹ Caulaincourt to the Emperor: "January 17, 1811—Sire: Since my repeated applications to Your Majesty's Minister have remained unanswered, I respectfully take the liberty of addressing myself directly to you in the matter of being replaced in my post here. After a stay of four years in a climate that has totally ruined my health, I take the liberty, Sire, of flattering myself that my services in Russia, as those near to Your Majesty, have justified the confidence with which you have honoured me, and which I deserve. May I then hope that Your Majesty will favourably consider my case? In the existing circumstances anyone would prove more useful to you at Petersburg than your Master of the Horse. I would go further. I serve my master, and seek to advance the interests confided to me, because I have more devotion than strength; but in reality I have for a long time now been a sick man. In ordinary circumstances, many another would most certainly have taken to his bed. Your Majesty desired me to stay in Russia for a year; obediently I have served you there for four. I presume, therefore, to beg Your Majesty's permission not to have to spend here the remainder of a winter which is likely to kill me, and the honour of again being near your august person. I am . . ." (*Archives de Caulaincourt*, file 2, minute).

² Napoleon informed Alexander of this change in a letter of February 28, 1811, in which he said, "The Duke of Vicenza's ill health obliges me to send him letters of recall" (*Correspondance*, 17395). Caulaincourt was replaced by the Comte de Lauriston.

³ Champagny and Savary.

4400

M. DE LESSEPS

the post, with the Consul-General.¹ They were asked to send two despatches a week dealing with politics, trade and gossip; and I received letters through the post in a manner calculated to irritate and embarrass me.

These methods met with no success. M. de Lesseps, the Consul-General, an honourable and worthy man, failed in none of his duties. Like myself, he shut his eyes to nothing. Since our Ministry was unable to find what it sought in the truthful and impartial language which he employed, and since his despatches, like those of most of his colleagues, contained no details and news that could be used in bulletins to create the desired impression, he was more than once reprimanded; and when I arrived in Paris I found that this honest man was in as bad odour as myself. The Emperor had just cancelled with his own hand the annual gratuity which the Ministry of Marine allowed him to cover his expenses. There was even some question of his being replaced. No gratuity was ever more deserved or better earned, as M. de Lesseps looked after the interests of French shipping better than he looked after his own interests; and unquestionably he was above suspicion in the matter of bribery. His thirty years of service, his probity, his well-known trustworthiness, all counted for nothing. Although he was a gentleman, because he had been honourable and the father of five children, he had no private resources, and was now likely to find himself suddenly deprived of all means of earning a livelihood.

The Russian Government took no account of ministerial tricks, and changed neither the direction nor even the essential character of its policy. The Tsar Alexander and Count Rumiantsof remained impassive in the midst of these attacks. Even their language remained the same. "A wise monarch,"

CH. 13 JUN

¹ Baron Jean-Baptiste-Barthélemy de Lesseps, born at Cette on January 27, 1766, died at Lisbon on April 6, 1834, whose father, Mathieu, had already been Consul-General at Petersburg, and had taken part as an interpreter in the Pérouse expedition. Appointed Consul at Cronstadt in October 1788, he had passed directly, in 1792, to the Petersburg Consulate, which post he retained until 1812. We shall meet with him again as a commissioner at Moscow during the French expedition. After this he was *chargé d'affaires* at Lisbon from July 1815 to November 17, 1833. (See *La Vie de Pierre Ruffin*, by Henri Dehérain, I, 77.)

the Tsar Alexander said to me more than once, "does not allow the fate of the nation he governs to depend on the intrigues and ambitions of a handful of mischief-makers. Influence is being brought to bear on the Emperor Napoleon to excite him. Time will make all that clear. If he wishes to go to war with me, *he* will have to fire the first shot."

All the news reaching me from Paris, and all that I learned, left me in no doubt as to the Emperor Napoleon's feelings towards me. Unable to find anything reprehensible in my conduct, or in my manner of conducting his affairs, he took vengeance on my friends, and exiled Madame de C——, whom, without her asking him, he had appointed a lady-in-waiting at the Court at the time of his marriage with the Empress Marie Louise.¹ He had even made much of her, paid her special attention on all his journeys, probably thinking thereby to gratify me, since at the time I was useful to him in Russia. This piece of news, which I received some time before leaving Petersburg, enlightened me as to the way the wind was blowing politically, and as to my own position. I was told at the same time that if the Emperor did not banish me, he would make me feel his displeasure in some other way. Since I learned also of the forthcoming departure of M. de Lauriston, who was coming to take my place, I found plenty of compensation for the other news. What I chiefly desired was to escape from a situation in which the political burden heaped on me weighed as heavily on my principles as on my opinions.

In fact, M. de Lauriston arrived some considerable time afterwards.² His journey had been protracted because the Emperor had insisted on his passing through Danzig to see his troops and military preparations, the object being no doubt to lend a slightly hostile character to the object of his mission. Such, at least, was the commonly accepted explanation in Petersburg. Thus M. de Lauriston's visit to Danzig was

¹ Mme de Camisy had been appointed lady-in-waiting to the Empress Marie Louise on February 25, 1810. Before that, she had been lady-in-waiting to Josephine, September 23, 1805. She had been invited at the end of 1810 by Savary to stay in Normandy with his father.

² M. de Lauriston arrived in Petersburg on May 9, 1811.

CONVERSATION WITH THE EMPEROR

doubly disagreeable, and his rectitude and loyalty were put to a painful test from the very first.

In accordance with my instructions, I remained with him for several days, and then set forth myself.¹ Fortified by my consciousness of having served the Emperor well, and of having told him the truth, I pressed on to Paris, where I arrived on June 5th, at nine o'clock in the morning. One of my friends had met me near Châlons. What he told me about the Emperor's intentions, and about his irritation with me, was both disagreeable and perturbing. It appeared, however, that important interests and the situation in Spain, which, according to the latest news, was far from satisfactory, would make it necessary for the Emperor once more to put off the execution of his projects directed against Russia, and that the war, which a month previously everyone had generally regarded as imminent, would be again postponed. This change was attributed to the news from Spain, and the general feeling was that on this account he would treat me fairly well in public, so as to discredit the idea of a breach with Russia, which had been expected earlier and had somewhat alarmed public opinion.

The Emperor was at Saint-Cloud.² By eleven o'clock I was there. His Majesty received me coldly, and at once began heatedly to enumerate his imaginary grievances against the Tsar Alexander, but without reproaching me personally. He spoke of the ukase prohibiting foreign imports,³ and of the admission of neutral and American ships into Russian ports, which, he said, was an infringement of the Continental System. He went on to say that the Tsar was treacherous, that he was arming to make war on France,

¹ M. de Caulaincourt left Petersburg on May 19, 1811, having presented his letters of recall on May 11th to Alexander.

² Napoleon, returning from his visit to Cherbourg, had arrived at Saint-Cloud on the previous day, June 4, 1811, at one o'clock in the afternoon.

³ The ukase of December 31, 1810, which prohibited the entry of foreign merchandise and silks, was intended to remedy the falling rate of exchange brought about by the constant drain of capital abroad to pay for imported goods, Russia being unable to export anything herself. It was also intended to encourage the development of home industries. (*Note by M. de Caulaincourt.*) Cf. *Rélations* by the Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovitch, V, 262; Caulaincourt to Champagny, January 15, 1811.

that troops from Moldavia were on their way to the Dwina. The Emperor repeated all the falsehoods, all the fantastic stories, which were fabricated in Danzig, in the Duchy of Warsaw, and even in the North of Germany, to please him, the falsity of which had been proved time and again, sometimes by means of investigations carried out on the spot, sometimes even by the march of events.

I replied to all this by facts which he had already read in my despatches, wherein they were set forth—facts going to show that the ukase was a consequence of the falling exchange rate; that it was impossible to import goods from outside when there was no possibility of exporting, since thereby the country lost all its specie, and that the sudden prohibition in Germany, as well as in France, of the entry of goods formerly imported from Russia had contributed not a little to bring about this state of affairs. As to the admission of neutral shipping, I repeated what His Majesty knew as well as I did; namely, that his sale of licences,¹ and the way in which, during the last eighteen months, English ships coming directly from England had been allowed openly to enter our ports, had opened everyone's eyes, and that it was not to be expected that the Government and population of a country like Russia, which had so greatly suffered through inability to export its products, would remain blind to such facts.

I went on to point out that public credit had felt the effects of all this to such an extent that the rouble, which was worth 2 fr. 90 when I first arrived in Petersburg, had fallen to 1 fr. 50; that commercial restrictions were keenly felt in a country unable to consume its own produce, this

¹ The system whereby the Government sold licences to commercial houses was authorized by the Emperor during the year 1810. (*Caulaincourt's note.*) Regarding this question of licences, see Thiers, XII, 192: "Henceforth every vessel sailing on the high seas or the Mediterranean was bound, in order not to be liable to seizure by our privateers, to take out a licence stating whence she had come, the places at which she had touched, and the nature of her cargo, whether on her outward or homeward journey. A vessel was allowed, if she concealed her nationality, to go even to England, in spite of the Berlin and Milan decrees, provided she carried away French produce and brought back certain specified merchandise." Cf. *Relations* by the Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovitch, V, 4; Caulaincourt to Champagny, May 27, 1810.

being chiefly basic commodities whose bulk made it in any case difficult to export; that, since the population was accustomed to being provided with colonial goods, notably sugar, the Tsar, even if he had so wished, would have been unable to enforce an absolute prohibition (which would have driven up the prices of such goods to exorbitant levels and encouraged smuggling), when everyone knew perfectly well that for a long time past we had not enforced it ourselves, since our licences had even reached the ports of Russia, there to mock the embarrassments and losses suffered by the trade of that country. I reminded him of the affair of the *William-Gustave* of Bordeaux,¹ and that he had given none of the financial or other help which he had promised; that the fifteen millions which were to have been spent on naval armaments,² and which he had instructed me to announce, had not been provided. I further pointed out that the correspondence files would show all the measures of which he now complained to have been foreseen long before, and that he had done nothing to anticipate them; that from the first the Tsar Alexander had described our confiscation of all neutral cargoes as a veiled monopoly, and had declared that *he would not ruin his subjects to enrich his exchequer*. Moreover, I observed, it was not true, as His Majesty suggested, that neutral vessels were secretly admitted, since, after having

¹ The *William-Gustave*, belonging to a Bordeaux shipowner M. Guillot, arrived in Russia at the beginning of 1810 flying a neutral flag. Previously the vessel had gone directly from Bordeaux to England, and it was reasonable to conclude, therefore, that her cargo belonged to the London house of Favanne, and not to Guillot. On the strength of the continental blockade this ship was sequestered by the Russian authorities. It appeared, however, that her cargo included certain French goods; and the *William-Gustave* was able to produce a French licence. Following out instructions sent by Champagny on February 10, 1810, Caulaincourt obtained the restitution of the ship in October 1810. "The Emperor," the Duke of Vicenza said, "did me the honour to inform me that this vessel was on the evidence liable to confiscation; that, seeking to maintain the policy adopted against England, he had not been able to allow any exceptions for fear of opening the door to abuses; that the sequestration of the *William-Gustave* had had no other purpose than this; but that, since the condemnation of the other vessels concerned had been irrevocably pronounced, he was happy to make an exception in the case of a French owner on account of his being provided with a licence from the Emperor." See Caulaincourt's letters to Champagny, March 26, 1810, October 23, 1810; to Napoleon, November 28, 1810; to Champagny, March 21, 1811.

² Convention of January 24, 1808 (Martens, XIV, 57).

confiscated the cargoes of more than sixty which had touched at England, the Russian Government had given out an advance warning that in consequence of changes which we had instituted for some time past in the working of the system—a system, be it noted, jointly adopted, and still observed by Russia—it had been decided to admit neutral vessels which, after rigorous examination, could prove that they really were neutral and had not touched at England. I gave instances of numerous cases in which cargoes had been confiscated because the ship carrying them had done no more than put in at an English port; and I spoke of the effect produced by our newspapers announcing the admission into our ports of licensed vessels coming from England.

In regard to the character of the Tsar Alexander, I reminded him of how King Joseph had been officially recognized by Russia just when our affairs in Spain were going badly, and when the Tsar knew him to be in danger;¹ in regard to the transference of troops from Moldavia, I told him of the proposal made by the Tsar Alexander to M. de Lauriston to send his aide-de-camp right along the Turkish line, starting at Kiev itself, in order to convince himself that each of the regiments reported to have been sent to the Duchy of Warsaw² was, in fact, in its place; in regard to other movements of troops, I begged His Majesty to take account of that part of my correspondence which described them in detail. I explained how the Tsar Alexander, while he complained to me about the movements of our troops, would often tell me himself of the counter-movements he was making with his own, adding, "I do nothing in secret. I am not transferring troops to my frontiers; but I am taking steps to be able to withstand a possible surprise attack, to which the movements of French troops, three hundred leagues in advance of the main French army, lay me open."

I reminded the Emperor of the manner in which he had concluded the last peace with Austria, and his scant regard for the feelings of Russia.

¹ Russia had recognized Joseph as King of Spain as early as July, 1808.

² See letter from Lauriston to Maret, May 29, 1811.

"I gave her 300,000 souls.¹ It's more than she gained on her own account!"

"True, Sire! But in such a case a more careful consideration of the form in which your policy was carried out would have safeguarded its substance. Your Majesty would have been better advised to give nothing at all."

I spoke to him of the effect inevitably produced by his refusal to ratify the Polish Convention² in view of the fact that the Convention had resulted from an offer made by him and instructions he had given me. I spoke to him of his openly sending armaments to the Duchy of Warsaw, the fact being announced in our newspapers; of the Oldenburg affair; of his meetings; of his changed policy in Germany (this, too, publicly announced); of the letters which the Ministry sent through the post, their tone was more provocative than cannon-balls; of the crowd of indiscreet agents sent out in every direction to stir up trouble. Finally, I told

¹ An article in the Treaty of Vienna of October 14, 1809, said: "H.M. the Emperor of Austria cedes, and unequivocally yields up, to H.M. the Emperor of Russia a territory with a population of 400,000 souls in the most eastern part of ancient Galicia, the town of Brody not being included therein. The boundaries of this territory will be fixed by friendly agreement between representatives of the two countries" (*Le Clercq, Recueil des Traités de la France*. Paris: Amyot, 1864, II, 295). Regarding the Tsar's dissatisfaction in consequence of the concessions made to the Duchy of Warsaw, see Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, II, 167.

² After the peace with Austria, the Emperor, thinking that certain demonstrations in Poland, and certain unrestrained articles in the newspapers, might understandably have made Russia uneasy about his policy in regard to Poland, offered the Petersburg Government a convention making clear to the Poles that he had no intention of re-establishing their kingdom. He announced his intention to make, in this respect, any formal statements that might be thought necessary to dismiss once and for all the very idea of such a re-establishment; and when the Convention had been signed, the Emperor refused to ratify it. He proposed a different wording, which, as Count Rumiantsof pointed out, being confined to generalities, did not at all meet the case. The same Minister added that it would be better for the sake of the alliance to let the whole matter drop. (*Caulaincourt's note*.)

Regarding this proposal, see Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, II, 169, 184, 221, 280. The Convention had been signed by Caulaincourt and Rumiantsof at Petersburg, January 4, 1810. Article 1 said: "The Kingdom of Poland will never be re-established." The Emperor Napoleon, along with his refusal to ratify this text, sent, on February 10, a counter-project to Caulaincourt, in which this Article had been replaced by another beginning as follows: "The Emperor Napoleon promises not to favour any undertaking aiming at a re-establishment of the Kingdom of Poland."

the Emperor frankly that, if he wanted a war, his Government was doing everything it could to bring one about; it was even crying its purpose from the house-tops, and if he regarded the Russian alliance as worth maintaining, I was unable to understand what purpose all these pin-pricks could possibly serve.

The Emperor was extremely annoyed with me, and told me that I had been duped by the Tsar Alexander and the Russians; that I didn't understand what was going on; that Marshal Davout was better informed than I was;¹ that General Rapp kept him with a clearer idea of the course of events,² and so on. . . .

I replied that others were quite at liberty to fan the flames by repeating the absurd stories of certain petty agents anxious to earn their pay, but that, for my own part, I was confident of the correctness of my written despatches and of what I had had the honour of repeating to him; indeed, I was prepared to *answer with my person and my life* if M. de Lauriston, and the course of events, did not bear out all that I had written and said to him.

I do not know if my certainty gave the Emperor matter for serious reflection; but for at least a quarter of an hour he kept silent, pacing up and down his study without saying a word. The silence was broken at last by his saying: "You believe, then, that Russia does not want war, and that she would remain in the alliance and take steps to uphold the Continental System if I satisfied her in regard to Poland?"

"It is not only a matter of Poland," I replied. "But I am confident, Sire, that all would be well if Your Majesty would withdraw from Danzig and Prussia the greater part of the forces whose concentration there is believed to menace Russia."

"The Russians are afraid, then?" the Emperor said.

¹ Davout, commander-in-chief of the army in Germany since January 1, 1810, had been appointed Governor-General of Hamburg on December 1, 1810. He had taken up this post on February 9, 1811.

² Rapp had been appointed Governor of Danzig on June 2, 1807, and had taken up this post, after the Wagram campaign and a stay in France, on June 10, 1810.

"No, Sire. But, being reasonable people, they prefer an open state of war to a situation which is not a genuine peace."

"So they think they can dictate to me?"

"No, Sire."

"Nevertheless, if they insist on my evacuating Danzig just to gratify Alexander, that amounts to dictation."

"The Emperor Alexander specifies nothing, doubtless in order not to create the impression that he is issuing threats; he simply describes what has happened since Tilsit, and holds that the placing of Your Majesty's army three hundred leagues in advance of your frontiers is incompatible with the spirit and maintenance of the alliance. I have been able to observe the causes of his perturbation, and have therefore been able to tell Your Majesty what would suffice to set his doubts at rest."

"Before long I shall be in the position of having to ask Alexander's leave to hold a parade at Mayence!"

"No, Sire; but parades at Danzig gall him."

"I offered him an exchange for Oldenburg; he spurned it. I offered to arrange matters in regard to the Duchy of Oldenburg; he would not hear of it."

"Your Majesty had just expelled the Duke of Oldenburg, a relative of the Emperor's, from his Duchy, and at a time when the marriage between his son and the Emperor's sister was taking place.¹ Could he, in such circumstances, be expected to act as Your Majesty's *préfet* at Erfurt?² Was not such a proposal calculated to offend against all the proprieties, and in itself to constitute a new source of permanent difficulties between the two Courts. Your Majesty cannot have failed to realize that it would have been more prudent, as well as more seemly, to refrain from making it."

"The Russians are very proud nowadays."

"My duty, in this case, is to argue against Your Majesty. I neither approve nor blame; I report facts. Later on, Your Majesty will be able to judge whether all these grievances,

¹ Oldenburg had been in effect annexed by France on February 18, 1811.

² It will be remembered that Napoleon had offered the regent of Oldenburg Erfurt in exchange for his Duchy.

even if they were well-founded, would be sufficient cause for you to sacrifice the advantages of the alliance."

"They want to make war on me, I tell you."

"The circumspection with which explanations have been made proves that they want neither to make war on, nor to dictate terms to, Your Majesty; at the same time, everything has persuaded me that they would not tamely allow you to occupy their country."

"The Russians want to force me to evacuate Danzig. They believe they can lead me on a string like their King of Poland. I am not Louis XV. The French people would not tolerate such a humiliation."

Since I made no reply, the Emperor repeated several times, and with indignation, that *the French people would not tolerate such a humiliation, and that he was not Louis XV.* Then came a lengthy silence.

He broke it by saying:

"So you would like to humiliate me?"

"I would not wish Your Majesty to be humiliated, any more than I would wish France to be humiliated," I replied. "You ask me to indicate the means whereby the alliance and good relations with Russia might be maintained. I have indicated them."

"Do you advise me to suffer this humiliation?"

"Yes, Sire—that is, resume the position you took up after Erfurt. I see no humiliation in that, if Your Majesty wishes to maintain peace and the alliance. If you believe in the re-establishment of Poland as a political unit to be more to your interest, discussion is pointless, as also are my remarks; for such a policy is incompatible with an alliance with Russia. In that case, quite a different line of argument has to be applied, in regard to which my opinion is without value."

"I have told you before that I have no wish to re-establish Poland."

"Then I do not understand for what Your Majesty has sacrificed your alliance with Russia."

"It is Russia who broke the alliance because she was embarrassed by the Continental System."

"This is quite a different question. I cannot give an unprejudiced opinion, but Your Majesty knows quite well that the System was still being fully observed at Petersburg, and that there we were still thinking in terms of Tilsit, six months after French ships provided with licences were returning with cargoes from England."

The Emperor smiled and pinched my ear, saying to me as he did so: "And are you really so fond of Alexander?"

"No, Sire; but I am fond of peace."

"I, too," the Emperor replied. "But I won't have the Russians ordering me to evacuate Danzig."

"They never spoke of it in such a way. 'The Emperor Napoleon,' the Tsar said to me when I took leave of him, 'knows everything that has harmed the alliance, everything that disturbs Europe, everything that menaces, even directly threatens, his ally. He will understand better than anyone else, assuming that the alliance is still useful to him, everything that is necessary to maintain it. The present state of affairs cannot continue, because the alliance must be useful to both parties, whereas, since your troops have been on my frontiers, it has been for me alone to keep the peace. If I have not hitherto demanded explanations about all that has happened, it is because I hoped that the Emperor Napoleon would come to see more clearly what were his real interests, and again adopt a policy more compatible with the alliance that has united us. If it turns out that this alliance does not lead to England making peace, and, in consequence, to safeguarding the general peace, I shall know what to do.'"

"This kind of reasoning deceives you because it is all wrapped up in cajoleries; but I'm too old a hand to be duped. I know the tricks of the trade too well."

"And I—if Your Majesty will allow me to make one more observation . . ."

"Go on," the Emperor said sharply.

"For my part, Sire, if I may take the liberty of repeating myself to Your Majesty, I see only two possible lines of conduct; to re-establish Poland and proclaim her independence, thus getting the Poles on your side and securing

certain political advantages; or to maintain the Russian alliance, thus bringing about peace with England and settling your affairs in Spain."

"Which would you take?"

"Maintenance of the alliance, Sire. It is the more prudent course, and the one more likely to lead to peace."

"You are always talking about peace. Peace is only worth having when it is lasting and honourable. I do not want a peace which ruins my trade, as the Peace of Amiens did. For peace to be practicable and lasting, England has got to be convinced that she can count on no help from the Continent. Therefore, there must be no question of the Russian colossus and its hordes being able to threaten the South with invasion."

"Your Majesty, then, inclines towards Poland? In that case, you owe it to yourself and to your great objective to adopt a quite different tone. While the project has been under preparation you have had time to reflect on it. It is a bold undertaking to take the offensive with the Spanish and English wars already on your hands."

"I don't want war, and I do not want Poland," the Emperor answered quickly, as if afraid of letting the argument sink in. "But I want an alliance to serve my ends; and it hasn't served them since neutral ships were allowed to enter Russian ports. In fact, it has never served my ends. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the Russians could be persuaded to march against Austria in the Austrian war."

"The important thing from the point of view of Your Majesty is that they did march and did fight and this, when you consider that I was asking them to defend Warsaw and the Poles, their enemies, was a great deal. Politically, their help was well worth having; and the proof is that Austria made peace."

"So long as the Emperor Alexander allows neutral ships in Russian ports the Continental System can have no reality."

"Your Majesty cannot expect to impose on the Russians, as on the people of Hamburg, privations that you no longer

impose on yourself. If you wish to reintroduce the full Continental System as at first accepted, I have no doubt that the Russians will agree; if you allow modifications in the case of France, the Russians, in view of their position, have no alternative but to follow suit, and there is nothing for it but to tolerate their doing so."

The Emperor reverted to the successive points already discussed. Being unable to escape the facts, he tried to minimize or to deny them. Others he put down to my supposed credulity. They were a consequence, he said, of the Tsar Alexander's cajoleries. At one point, when I was quite temperately praising the character of that Prince, he said impatiently, "If certain ladies in Paris heard you, they'd dote even more on the Tsar Alexander than they do already. The tales of his charming manners and his gallantry at Erfurt turned their heads. It would all make a nice story for the Parisians."

I made no reply.

The Emperor's irritation, although repressed, was obvious. I felt that I had made some impression on him; and, thinking that this was my only chance to influence him by making certain observations which I thought important, I continued to talk with the same frankness.

Coming back to the Polish Convention, the Emperor said: "The dispute turned on the wording of the Convention. I only wanted to change its form."

I replied that it would have been better to reject the Convention out of hand than to propose changes which made it only too obvious that, from being prepared to secure Russia against the re-establishment of Poland, French policy had changed in the interval between one courier and another, and that other projects were afoot.

"Alexander affected pride. He did not want the Convention. The refusal came from his side," the Emperor went on. "He now finds the Convention pointless: am I to take it that he no longer credits me with the intention of going to war to re-establish Poland?"

"He is not sure," I replied, "whether the war will be

for the Poles, or for Your Majesty; but he is not blind to the preparations you have made."

"He is afraid of me?"

"No, Sire, because, while recognizing your military talent, he has often pointed out to me that his country was large; that, though your genius would give you many advantages over his generals, even if no occasion arose to fight you in advantageous circumstances, there was plenty of margin for ceding you territory, and that to separate you from France and from your resources would be, in itself, a means of successfully fighting you. They realize in Russia the impossibility of attacking where Your Majesty is; but, since you cannot be everywhere, they do not hide their intention of attacking only where Your Majesty is not. 'It will not be a one-day war,' the Tsar Alexander said. Your Majesty will be obliged to return to France, and then every advantage will be with the Russians; then the winter, the cruel climate, and, most important of all, the Tsar's determination and avowed intention to prolong the struggle, and not, like so many other monarchs, to have the weakness to sign a peace treaty in his capital. . . . These are the very words, the thoughts of the Tsar Alexander which I quote to Your Majesty. Since Your Majesty's policy has become more threatening, so that it looks as if matters will be pushed to the limit, he has made no attempt to hide either his opinions or his intentions."

"Admit frankly," said the Emperor Napoleon, "that it is Alexander who wants to make war on me."

"No, Sire," I replied once again; "I would stake my life on his not firing the first shot or being the first to cross his frontiers."

"We're agreed, then," the Emperor went on; "because I have no intention of going into Russia, nor any wish for a war or the re-establishment of Poland."

"Then, Sire, you ought to explain your intentions, so that everyone may know why Your Majesty's troops are concentrated in Danzig and the north of Prussia."

The Emperor made no answer to this. He spoke of the

Russian nobles who, in the event of a war, would fear for their palaces, and, after a good battle, would force the Tsar Alexander to conclude a peace.

"Your Majesty is mistaken," I replied, and repeated to the Emperor words used by the Tsar which had greatly impressed me in the course of certain private conversations I had with him after the arrival of M. de Lauriston, when my position no longer had any political significance; words which were merely a more emphatic expression of what he had led me to understand some time before. They impressed me so much that I noted them down on returning home, and quote them here with the certainty that, to the best of my knowledge, my recollection of them was substantially correct:—

"If the Emperor Napoleon makes war on me," the Tsar Alexander said to me, "it is possible, even probable, that we shall be defeated, assuming that we fight. But that will not mean that he can dictate a peace. The Spaniards have often been defeated; and they are not beaten, nor have they submitted. But they are not so far away from Paris as we are, and have neither our climate nor our resources to help them. We shall take no risks. We have plenty of room; and our standing army is well organized, which means, as the Emperor Napoleon has admitted, that we need never accept a dictated peace, whatever reverses we may suffer. What is more, in such circumstances the victor is forced to accept the terms of the vanquished. The Emperor Napoleon made a remark to this effect to Tchernychev¹ in Vienna after the battle of Wagram. He would not have made peace then if Austria had not kept an army intact. Results have to keep pace with his thoughts, because, being often absent from France, he is always anxious to return there. This is the teaching of a Master. I shall not be the first to draw my sword, but I shall be the last to sheath it. The Spaniards

¹ Alexander Ivanovitch Tchernychev, born in 1779, colonel in the Russian Guards, was the Emperor Alexander's aide-de-camp. He was present at the Battle of Wagram, and stood beside Napoleon, who decorated him with the Legion of Honour. He was entrusted with various missions between 1809 and 1812. Tchernychev was Minister for War in 1828, and died at Castellamare on June 20, 1857.

have proved that lack of perseverance has been the undoing of all the States on which your master has made war. The Emperor Napoleon's remark to Tchernychev, in the latest war with Austria, shows clearly enough that the Austrians could have obtained better terms if they had been more persevering. People don't know how to suffer. If the fighting went against me, I should retire to Kamtchatka rather than cede provinces and sign treaties in my capital, that were really only truces. Your Frenchman is brave; but long privations and a bad climate wear him down and discourage him. Our climate, our winter, will fight on our side. With you, marvels only take place where the Emperor is in personal attendance; and he cannot be everywhere, he cannot be absent from Paris year after year."

The Emperor listened to me with the closest attention, even with some astonishment. He appeared to be greatly preoccupied, and kept silent for a while. I thought I had made a deep impression on him, since his face, his whole bearing, which hitherto manifested only an extreme severity, became open and friendly. He seemed to wish to encourage me to go on, not only by looks, but by the questions he put. He spoke of society in Russia, of the army, of the administration, and even referred to the Tsar Alexander without manifesting his usual ill-humour at mention of this name. In fact, the Emperor gave every indication at this moment of being kindly disposed towards me, and referred appreciatively to the manner in which I had served him. I assured him that he was mistaken about the Tsar Alexander and about Russia; and it was of the utmost importance not to base his conclusions about that country on what certain persons told him, or about the army on what he had seen at Friedland; that, having been threatened for a year, it had been possible for the Russians to take account of all eventualities, particularly to take account of the possibility of our enjoying immediate successes.

After listening to me attentively, the Emperor began enumerating the troops and general resources at his disposal. When he reverted to this theme I realized that all hope of

peace was at an end, since it was enumerations of this kind which, more than anything, intoxicated him. Indeed he ended by telling me that one good battle would knock the bottom out of my friend Alexander's fine resolutions, not to mention his sand fortifications—alluding to the defence works which were being thrown up along the banks of the Dwina and at Riga.

He spoke of the situation in Spain, and referred with pique to his generals there and the set-backs they had suffered, expressing his opinion that this vexatious state of affairs was due to the incompetence of the King, his brother, and of the French generals, and announcing his determination to make an end of it. He tried to persuade me that he could do this whenever he was so minded, but that the English would then attack elsewhere, perhaps even in France. Thus, he concluded, it was just as well—perhaps a positive advantage—for them to be in Portugal. Then he returned to the Tsar Alexander.

"He is fickle and feeble," he said once again.

"He is obstinate," I replied. "His conciliatory nature makes him give way easily when he does not feel the issues at stake to be particularly important; but at the same time he marks out a circle beyond which there is no making him yield."

"He has the Greek character—he is untrustworthy," the Emperor repeated yet again.

"I would not suggest," I said, "that he has always spoken everything that was in his mind; but whatever he had deigned to say to me has proved correct, and whatever promises he has made to Your Majesty through me he has kept."

"Alexander is ambitious. There is some hidden purpose which he hopes to achieve through war. He wants war, I tell you. Otherwise, why should he refuse every arrangement I put forward? He has some secret purpose. Have you not been able to detect it? No, he has larger motives than Poland and Oldenburg."

"These motives, and the fact that your army is at Danzig,

are in themselves enough to explain the line he has taken; though naturally, like every government in Europe, he is uneasy about the change Your Majesty has made in your policy since Tilsit, and, more particularly, since the Peace of Vienna."

"What has all that to do with Alexander? It does not affect him. Have I not told him to take Finland, Wallachia and Moldavia? Have I not suggested that he should partition Turkey? Did I not give him 300 millions for the Austrian war?"

"Yes, Sire; but you would not expect such enticements to blind him to the fact that Your Majesty has since then marked out a quite new policy, whose execution begins in Poland—that is, in Russian territory."

"Like him, you are simply dreaming! Once more—I do not want to go to war with him; but he must fulfil the commitments which he has undertaken, and enforce an embargo on English trade. What has he to fear from changes in my policy? What do such changes matter to a country like Russia, away at the back of beyond?"

"On that point he has never explained himself to me."

"I don't prevent him from extending his dominions in Asia, or even in Turkey, if he wants to, so long as he does not touch Constantinople. He is displeased that I should hold Holland.¹ That upsets him because he needs foreign loans."

"The reunion of the Hanseatic towns,² the establishment of the Grand-Duchy of Frankfort, which means that Your Majesty intends to keep Italy;³ the giving of Hanover to Westphalia⁴—all these changes, brought about in times of peace, just peremptorily announced, alienate England and put obstacles in the way of making peace with her. There-

¹ After the abdication of King Louis, Napoleon annexed Holland by a decree of July 9, 1810.

² *Senatus Consultum* of December 13, 1810.

³ The Grand Duchy of Frankfort was established in 1806 in favour of M. de Dalberg, Elector of Mayence. On March 1, 1810, Napoleon nominated Prince Eugène hereditary Grand-Duke of Frankfort, thus making it certain that he would inherit the Grand Duchy on the death of Dalberg.

⁴ In 1806, Napoleon gave Hanover to Prussia in exchange for Anspach, Cleves and Neuchâtel. By the terms of the treaty of January 14, 1810 it was ceded to Jerome, with the exception of 15,000 inhabitants.

fore they conflict with Russia's best interests. Even so, it will not be on that account that she goes to war."

"And must I be dictated to by the English and by my brother¹ just to please Alexander? Rumiantsof knows quite well that, before taking these steps, I did everything in my power to induce England to make peace. Labouchère has been to London several times, even to speak for the Dutch.² Am I to allow the north of Germany to be flooded with English goods?"

"As provisional measures, these steps would have seemed advisable; but they are not provisional, and instead of a few battalions to garrison Customs offices, a whole army is marching northwards; so they have aroused apprehension."

"You see no further than Alexander; he, after all, is just afraid. The policy you complain of is what has taken all the heart out of the English, and will force them to make peace."

This conversation continued for some time longer. The Emperor jumped from one question to another, and, at long intervals, returned to the same questions, no doubt to see if I kept to the same answers. To judge from his air of pre-occupation, and from the long silences which broke up our five hours of conversation, it looked as if he were giving more serious consideration to the matters under discussion than perhaps he had ever given them before. After one of these long silences, he said, "It is the Austrian marriage which has set us at variance. The Tsar Alexander was angry because I did not marry his sister."

I took the liberty of reminding the Emperor that, as I had formerly reported to him, Russia was not at all eager for such a marriage; that, although the Emperor had not been able to refuse, without promising anything, to lend himself to the project, he would never have given way on the question of religion; that in any case there would have been a year's delay, even if the Tsar had been able to obtain his mother's

¹ King Louis of Holland.

² M. Labouchère, head of the house of Hope, partner and son-in-law of the English banker Baring, went to London on February 6, 1810, and had several interviews with the Marquis of Wellesley. Regarding these negotiations, see Albert Sorel, VI, 422, and *Documents historiques et réflexions sur le gouvernement de la Hollande*, by Louis Bonaparte, ex-King of Holland, III, 199.

treated by Alexander; that I had met many landowners from Polish Russia, and had found that, while of course they regretted their lost national independence, they had little stomach for a new venture to recover it which might not, even if it succeeded, involve Poland's being reinstated as an independent Power; that the example of the Duchy of Warsaw, whose situation, from their point of view, was far from satisfactory, had not turned them in our favour as much as His Majesty thought; that the rivalries persisting between the great Polish families, no less than the natural instability of the Polish character, would always hinder their common action. I added that the Emperor ought not to shut his eyes to the fact that it was only too well understood in Europe nowadays that, when he concerned himself with the affairs of a country, it was to serve his own rather than its interests.

"You think so, do you?"

"Yes, Sire," I replied.

"You do not mince your words," he said jokingly. "It's time to go to dinner," he added, and withdrew.

Thus ended a conversation which had lasted for five hours and left me with no hope that peace would be maintained in Europe.

Later, I saw the Duke of Bassano again. He assured me, as the Emperor had done, that there was no question of wanting war; that Petersburg's fears were groundless, and that the Emperor was not prepared now to reverse any of the measures he had thought it necessary to take.

Thenceforth, I had small hope of seeing the Emperor change his policy; nevertheless, I did not allow myself to be discouraged. The situation in Spain, bad though it was, might precipitate events which would induce a different political outlook. For two months past the tendency had been to carry on less agitation amongst the Poles, and to restrain the activities of generals and secret agents in Germany. The Emperor's views remained, I think, the same; but the probability is that the course of events in Spain, and a realization of the probable consequences of his prospective policy and his vast undertaking, made him somewhat indecisive. Ostensibly, the Government's attitude was less

THE EMPEROR'S PROMISES

aggressive, its object being to make the adoption of a pacific policy possible if developments made such a policy necessary, or if its wisdom became so apparent that the party favouring it triumphed. Meanwhile, military preparations were completed; and no real steps were taken to prevent the outbreak of war.

After my conversation with the Emperor, it was some considerable time before we had any private relations. My position was uncertain. In public he treated me well enough, for some time. I did not abate my protests against the exile of Madame de C——.¹ Though I worried him with letters and petitions, the Emperor avoided speaking to me personally about the matter. At last, however, he granted me an audience, and promised that she should be recalled, but without definitely authorizing her recall. I continued with my campaign, until, having been told by Duroc at my request that unless he kept this promise I should retire, His Majesty once more promised to allow Madame de C—— to return, and even obligingly said that she should resume her duties at the Court,² which was more than I had ventured to ask for. But next day it was clear that the Emperor had tacitly put a price on this mark of his favour, because, when I refused his request to tell Prince Kurakin³ that in my opinion the Emperor had no intention of re-establishing Poland nor any wish to see it re-established, and that he stood by the alliance and was arming only because Russia had mobilized, his promise to recall Mme de C—— remained unfulfilled, despite the fact that His Majesty had twice invited me to dine with him, and for eight days treated me in such a way as to suggest that he held me in great favour. During this time he had several long conversations with me at Saint-Cloud, and once, after dinner, at Bagatelle.⁴ In each case the conversation was about Russia.

¹ Madame de Canisy.

² As lady-in-waiting to Marie Louise.

³ Prince Alexander Borissovitch Kurakin (1752-1818), who had been Vice-Chancellor of Russia and signed the Peace of Tilsit, was Russian Ambassador in France from 1808. He continued in this post until 1812.

⁴ This dinner, at which Berthier was present, took place on July 28, 1811. See *Journal des Débats* of 30 and 31 July, 1811, and P. Marmottan, *Bagatelle, pavillon de chasse sous l'Empire et la Restauration* in the *Bulletin de la Commission historique de Neuilly*, 1905.

The Emperor continued to assure me that he had no desire for war, and really had small regard for the Poles. "A trivial people," he said, "and a State difficult to shape to any useful purpose. If the King I give them does not happen to suit, everything will go badly. And it is difficult to make a good choice. My family gives me no help. They are all insanely ambitious, ruinously extravagant, and devoid of talent." For the rest, the remarks about Russian affairs in the course of my first audience with the Emperor on arriving in Paris, were more or less repeated.

The Emperor's real desire was for me to persuade Prince Kurakin that there had been a mutual misunderstanding; that both sides had become irritated without knowing exactly why; that he had no intention of attacking Russia, and only stood out for the upholding of the Continental System so far as it was directed against England, and that therefore a consideration of ways and means of upholding it, and an adjustment of existing difference, were necessary. But when I approached fundamentals, and began to discuss in detail the mutual concessions whereby this object might be realized, the Emperor changed the subject. Since it was clear enough that he had not really altered his plans, but had, at the most, merely postponed their execution, and that all he wanted of me was that I should allay Russia's suspicions so that he might gain time, I avoided becoming his intermediary, and begged the Emperor to entrust M. de Lauriston with any communications he might wish to make to the Russian Government. This suggestion greatly displeased him, and brought our conversation to a summary conclusion.

Henceforth the Emperor, besides persecuting my friends, inflicted on me every sort of vexation which he could inflict on a State official, even to the extent of withholding payments to which I was entitled. He let slip no occasion of making me feel the weight of his displeasure, and replied to my complaints about my financial claims by pleading ignorance of the matter. My renewed solicitation to the Emperor in regard to Madame de C——'s exile met with no success, no matter whether I broached it verbally, or by letter, or through

the mediation of Duroc. Finally, I again raised the question of my retirement with the Grand Marshal.

"Less than ever is this the moment to take such a step," he said to me. "You will lose your friends and ruin yourself. Have patience, and things will straighten out. Just now the Emperor is annoyed with you; but he holds you in esteem; he is even fond of you. He takes great interest in Madame de C——. Things will straighten out, I tell you, if you do not lose your head and put yourself in the wrong. It is absurd of you to take the Russian business so much to heart. We can do nothing about it. Since you cannot hope to change the Emperor's plans, why irritate him? He has his point of view; he is aiming at some objective of which we know nothing. You can be certain that his policy is more far-seeing than ours. In short, I strongly advise you as a friend to postpone your plans for retirement."

He continued in this strain for a long time, pointing out to me again that too much insistence would lose me my friends and ruin myself to no avail. But discussing the same topic a few days later, the Emperor gave him reason to hope for a definite change in the near future. Duroc, who brought me this good news, again made me promise to be patient, and pointed out that as a soldier I could not leave the service before peace was concluded. He repeated that the Emperor would come round in time; that he was bitter, but always spoke of me with esteem.

Realizing that I was achieving nothing by this means, I addressed myself officially to the Minister for Police,¹ who broached the question frankly with the Emperor, pointing out that there was no reason for continuing an act of severity which was making a bad impression, even from the political point of view. But he obtained no satisfaction on this occasion.

It was at this period, I think, that the Emperor summoned one of his Ministers to Saint-Cloud. After a few minutes of general business conversation, he said to him: "Let us go for a stroll." When they reached a place on the terrace

¹ The Duke of Rovigo.

whence it was possible to see anyone approaching, and where no one could overhear them, he went on, "There is something I want you to do of which I have not spoken to a soul—not even to any of my Ministers. In any case it has nothing to do with them. I have decided on a great expedition. I shall need horses and transport on a large scale. The men I shall get easily enough; but the difficulty is to prepare transport facilities. I shall need an immense amount of transport because I shall be starting from the Niemen, and I intend to act over large distances and in different directions. This is why I need your help, and secrecy."

The Minister remarked that the project would involve considerable expenditure; that he would carry out his part with despatch and all possible discretion; but he could not prevent people talking when they saw waggons being assembled, and so on and so forth.

The Emperor, replying sharply to his first remark, said: "Come to the Tuileries the next time I go there. I'll show you 400 millions in gold.¹ Do not let the question of expense check you. There will be no shrinking from necessities."

Continuing the talk, the Emperor elaborated his policy, which was based on the necessity of crushing England by crushing the only Continental Power still strong enough to give him any trouble by joining with her. He spoke of the usefulness of isolating the Russians from European affairs, and of establishing in Central Europe a State which should act as a barrier against invasions from the North, adding that the moment was opportune; that later there would be no time for such an expedition, and that it was essential to strike this last blow in order to achieve a general settlement, and years of peace and of prosperity for us and our children after all these years of weariness and discomfort, but years also of glory.

¹ Actually there were at this time about 580 millions in the cellars of the Tuileries. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

The Minister of whom Caulaincourt speaks cannot be other than Lacuée de Cessac, who, being Minister of War from January 3, 1810, would have at his disposal all material, such as victuals, clothing, transport, hospitals.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

THE journey to Boulogne, along the coast and down through Holland, which followed the Emperor's round of visits to various palaces,¹ put an end for a while to the host of petty annoyances that plagued my life, taking us away, as it did, from Paris. But there was no alteration in the Emperor's acerbity towards me, even when the almost superhuman achievements of my department occasionally drew his involuntary though grudging praise during these astonishing journeys and constantly improvised missions.

The Emperor set out for Compiègne on September 16th,² arrived at Boulogne on the 19th, Ostend on the 22nd,³ Breskens on the 23rd, and went on board the *Charlemagne* on the 24th. At six o'clock in the evening a violent storm scattered the entire squadron and obliged him to remain on board until eight o'clock in the morning of the 27th. The Emperor then landed at Flushing. On the 28th he went to Middelburg, returning thence to Flushing, leaving at four o'clock next morning in a cutter to inspect the vanguard of the fleet and visit Terneuzen. From that place he went up the Scheldt to Antwerp, visiting Bath Forts on the way, and on reaching Antwerp⁴ joined the Empress, who had come by Laeken.

¹ The Emperor was in residence at Trianon from July 10 to July 23, 1811; at Rambouillet from August 6th to August 13th; at Paris from August 14th to August 15th. After returning to St. Cloud he went to Trianon on the 23rd, and reached Compiègne on August 29th.

² Caulaincourt is mistaken. The Emperor had been at Compiègne since August 29th, and did not leave until September 19th, when he started at half-past three in the morning, reaching Boulogne that same evening at eight o'clock.

³ Napoleon arrived at Ostend at three o'clock in the morning of September 23rd.

⁴ The Emperor reached Antwerp at one o'clock in the morning of the 30th. Marie Louise joined him at four o'clock in the afternoon.

The Emperor visited Willemstad and Helvelsluys on the 4th,¹ passed the night in the cutter off Hogplat, on the 5th saw Dordrecht, as well as some great rafts of floating timber, slept at Gorkum and reached Utrecht on the 6th. The 7th and 8th were spent in reviewing the infantry and cavalry on the heath three leagues outside the town,² and he also made an excursion to Amersfoort.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of the 9th he made his entry into Amsterdam. On the 15th he went to Helder, travelling partly in his carriage and partly on horseback. On the 16th he inspected the new forts³ and the squadron and examined the Texel.

On the 17th he paid a visit to the land forts and the river channel, leaving at noon. He visited Alkmar and Haarlem, returning to Amsterdam at nine o'clock in the evening.

On the 21st he went to Muiden and Naarden. On the 24th he went back to Haarlem, took his midday lunch at Katwijk, saw the authorities at Leiden, passed through Scheveningen and slept at The Hague. On the 25th he inspected the foundry,⁴ had luncheon at Delft, and reached Rotterdam at eleven o'clock. On the 26th there was a review at Utrecht,⁵ and His Majesty passed the night at the castle of Loo.

On the 28th he went to Zwolle by way of Deventer, held a review,⁶ and slept at Loo.

On the 29th he was at Nimuegen; the 30th at Wesel near Grave; on November 1st at Düsseldorf; the 5th at Cologne; the 6th at Bonn; the 7th at Juliers, sleeping at Liège; the 8th at Givet. Floods had carried away the bridge across the Meuse, which was not practicable until nine o'clock that evening. The night of the 10th was spent

¹ October.

² On the 7th, Napoleon reviewed the army corps of Marshal Oudinot, and on the 8th watched the manœuvring of the troops composing the camp at Utrecht.

³ The Forts Morland and Lasalle, which commanded the mouth of the Scheldt.

⁴ The ordnance foundry at The Hague.

⁵ More exactly, between Amersdorf and Utrecht; the review was of the 24th Horse Chasseurs, and of the Spanish regiment of Joseph Napoleon.

⁶ Of the troops from the camp at Groningen.

THE WINTER OF 1811-1812 IN PARIS

at Mézières; thence to Compiègne; and on the 11th we reached St. Cloud.¹

The maze of details connected with these journeys had rendered me indispensable to the Emperor. Too just not to appreciate my word, he was nevertheless curt in his relations with me. Once back in Paris, things resumed their normal course. No longer distracted from his sense of grievance against his Master of the Horse, and as my various petitions on behalf of friends reminded him that he could vex and punish me in matters close to my heart, the Emperor seemed in no disposition to treat me better.

Engaged in a matter that touched my honour, in that it concerned my country, and my self-esteem in that I had no mind to be the agent of a policy of which I disapproved, I was in an embarrassing position; but my silence in public on all these questions was my salvation.

Bowing to the unjust severity of a sovereign, who can never give way to a subject, I refrained from my complaints regarding things that affected me personally, but I appealed direct to the Emperor, or through Duroc and the Duc de Rovigo, against the injustice dealt out to my friends, who were entirely ignorant of my political views. My silence in public and my restraint were noticed by the Emperor. According to what Duroc told me, he approved of my conduct, yet not for one moment did he modify his own.

During the winter there were many festivities, full-dress balls and masked balls. At the State ball² I was the only high official not included in the grand quadrille with the Empress and the princesses.³ Hoping to pique me, the Emperor called for the Comte de Nansouty, who was not highly placed in the royal establishment.⁴ I was likewise

¹ On the 11th the Emperor and Empress reached Compiègne at half-past ten in the morning and set off again in the afternoon, reaching St. Cloud at six o'clock in the evening.

² February 6, 1812, in the Salle des Spectacles at the Tuileries.

³ In this quadrille the Empress had as her partner the Prince of Neuchâtel; Master of the Hunt; Queen Hortense, General Duroc, Grand Marshal of the Palace; Princess of Eckmühl, Prince Aldobrandini, principal equerry to the Empress; the Comtesse de Croix, the Comte de Nansouty.

⁴ General Champion de Nansouty, equerry to the Emperor.

passed over, or rather I was the only high official not invited, at supper at the Empress's table. So far as the supper was concerned I took this rebuff lightly, for it was possible to consider invitations to that as a personal matter; but as the quadrille concerned one of the prerogatives of my position and was a matter of public observation, I considered it my duty to lodge a complaint. The Emperor sent me word that the omission of my name had been a mistake; but I learned from Duroc, to whom he had dictated the list, that it had been intentional.

Duroc even warned me, with that obliging friendliness which characterized him, not to mention for the moment the return of my friends to Court, adding that he did not know what I had done or said, but that the Emperor was more incensed against me than ever. He observed that I spoke too warmly against Polish affairs, that when the Emperor discussed business with me I gave the impression of blaming him, and that this irritated him. He was doubtless alluding to two conversations the Emperor had had with me; one at the castle of Loo, during our journey to Holland, and the other two days previously,¹ in Paris. I will confine myself to but a brief summary of them, for with the exception of a few phrases which I will record, the conversations were on the same lines, and in almost the same terms, as those already reported.

"This journey," said the Emperor, "together with the measures I am going to take against English commerce, will prove to the Tsar Alexander that I remain staunch to the system of the alliance, and am more concerned with the internal prosperity of the Empire than with the warlike schemes attributed to me."

"In the meantime, the troops Your Majesty has assembled here are proceeding northwards. That does not seem to accord with the maintenance of peace."

"The Poles are calling me, but I am not thinking of that restoration, and although it would be politic and even in the

¹ That is, two days previous to his conversation with Duroc. The conversation at Loo must have taken place during the evening of October 27th or 28th.

interests of civilization, I am not thinking of it because the question of Austria would be too great a business."

"And yet, Sire, that is the only price I can imagine worth paying for the sacrifice of the alliance with Russia."

"I have no wish to sacrifice it. I am only occupying North Germany in order to strengthen the Continental System, and place England in a real quarantine in regard to Europe. To do this I must be strong everywhere. My brother Alexander is obstinate; he sees these measures as veiling some project of attack. He is wrong. Lauriston is constantly telling him so, but when a man is afraid he sees double, and at Petersburg they can see nothing but divisions on the march, armies standing in readiness, Poland in arms. It is I who might take offence, for the Russians have brought up the divisions which they previously brought from Asia."

After making many observations to prove to the Emperor that he could not deceive Petersburg regarding his real projects, I added that no political interest could justify a war that would take him eight hundred leagues from Paris whilst he had Spain and all the resources of England against him.

"It is because England is in Spain, and obliged to stay there, that she causes me no qualms. You understand nothing about affairs. You are just like the Russians; you can see nothing but threats, nothing but war, when this is just a disposition of forces necessary to make England sue for terms before six months have passed, so long as Rumiantsof does not lose his head."

The Emperor closed these conversations by a show of something more than impatience.

I returned to Duroc, who made me promise to see no more of Talleyrand, who, he told me, had been out of favour for some time with the Emperor for more reasons than one: notably on account of the reflections he had permitted himself to make regarding the war in Spain, notwithstanding that he had been among the first to urge the Emperor to seize that throne. Duroc added that we did not know the Emperor's wider projects nor his political views; he centred everything on the need of forcing England to make peace so that Europe

might finally enjoy lasting tranquillity. All Duroc's reflections were made in a spirit of kindness and concern for myself.

The winter was coming on. Negotiations had already started with Austria for an offensive and defensive alliance to be imposed on Prussia.¹ In all directions greater exertions than ever were being made to further the arrangements and dispositions for the Emperor's great undertaking. We were approaching the denouement of the events for which the projected interview at Dresden was the intended prelude. In the meantime Paris and the Court were busy with parties and entertainments.

One evening, at a Court function, the Emperor came up to Prince Kurakin² near the throne. He had a long conversation with him, and spoke so loudly that those about His Majesty felt it their duty to retire somewhat. At the same moment I was chatting with someone³ in the embrasure of a window. The Emperor was standing with his face towards me, to the left of the throne. All the despatches of the time have reported this conversation. The Emperor Napoleon complained that the Tsar Alexander wished to attack him, that he was no longer in the alliance, as he admitted pretended neutrals, that Russia was the scene of vast movements of troops. At the end of this conversation, which lasted for half an hour, the Emperor exclaimed loudly enough for me to hear him from where I was standing:

"According to M. de Caulaincourt the Tsar Alexander wishes to attack me."

The Emperor was so excited and spoke with such warmth, and his words came out with such rapidity, that Prince Kurakin, standing with his mouth open to reply, could not get a word in. Although they had withdrawn some distance, the bystanders were all ears, especially those members of the diplomatic corps who happened to be in the room.

"M. de Caulaincourt," the Emperor went on, "has turned

¹ The negotiations were based upon the treaty with Prussia of February 24, 1812, and that with Austria of March 14, 1812.

² This scene took place at the Tuileries on August 15, 1811.

³ Bessières, Duke of Istria.

Russian. The Tsar's blandishments have quite captured him."

Leaving Prince Kurakin, the Emperor took a few steps towards the middle of the room, seeking to read in the bystanders' eyes what impression he had made. Noticing me in the window—for I had certainly not escaped his attention—the Emperor came up to me and remarked peevishly:

"You have turned Russian, have you not?"

"I am a very good Frenchman, Sire," I answered very firmly; "and time will prove that I have told Your Majesty the truth, as a faithful servant should."

Seeing that I was taking the matter seriously, the Emperor then pretended that he had been joking.

"I know well enough that you are an honest man," he said, "but the Tsar Alexander's cajoleries have turned your head. In fact you have become a Russian," he added, with a smile.

He then turned away and began to speak to other persons.

Next day, having failed to obtain a private audience with the Emperor, I made a formal declaration to Duroc, for him to pass on to His Majesty, that I wished to resign, and at the same time explained myself so forcibly to the Minister of Police that within twenty-four hours Madame de C——¹ had permission to return from exile.

On this point I must render the Duke of Rovigo the justice that many others beside myself owe him. He spoke frankly to the Emperor about this act of severity, as he did, indeed, about many similar affairs, seeking to delay action or even to bring about a reversal of his decision, without fearing the harsh and disagreeable consequences that he might bring on himself. Undoubtedly Duroc told the Emperor the truth more than any other Minister ventured to do.

I had spoken to Duroc with the tone of a man who has made up his mind, and he came to see me on the following morning. He told me that the Emperor had not meant to say anything distasteful to me; he had merely said to Prince

¹Madame de Canisy, who had been banished since the end of 1810, was permitted to return to Paris in August, 1811.

Kurakin what he had subsequently said to me in order that the Tsar Alexander should know that I remained his friend; he valued me highly, but I ought to consider his susceptibilities more in some ways, and not fall out with him as I did when he discussed policy with me; it was easier to lead him by giving way on certain points than by directly opposing his views. He told me that I worried myself needlessly with matters which did not actually concern me, and by so doing harmed myself and my friends without benefit to policy or person; it was foolish to sacrifice oneself for high matters which one could in no way change, or when one had not armies to set up in opposition. It was a vain self-sacrifice. I tried unavailingly to explain my feelings to him. He was amused at what I called doing my duty. He let me see, however, that at heart he agreed with me, but that it would be a purposeless waste of his time and devotion even to hope to persuade the Emperor to other political views.

Towards the end of winter and in the spring¹ I had two further lengthy conversations with the Emperor, one of which took place very shortly after this explanation with Duroc. They turned on political questions. In the first, the Emperor tried once again to persuade me that he no longer contemplated the restoration of Poland, and had no wish whatever to go to war with Russia; in a word, that he only wanted to force England to abandon her groundless pretensions and make peace, and to accomplish this it was essential that Russia should effectively close her ports to English commerce, whereas for a year past she had been receiving English goods brought in under the American flag.

To this I objected that we ourselves had been receiving goods by licences, a double duty collected, on the licence and on the goods.²

"Possibly so," answered the Emperor, laughing. "I cannot go back on that, because of my maritime towns.

¹ Of 1812.

² By the decree of August 5, 1810, colonial goods coming into France in the cargoes of licensed vessels or those flying a neutral flag were allowed to circulate freely on production of certificates of origin and payment of a tax of 50 per cent.

Alexander has only to do the same himself. I would rather that Russia and its treasury should reap the profit than that it should go to so-called neutrals."

He then returned to his old idea, that by impounding all neutral goods the Emperor Alexander would be doing immense good, etc.

The upshot of this conversation was a request that I should see Prince Kurakin and speak to him in that sense. I refused formally, and said openly to the Emperor that he knew I no longer saw any Russians nor had relations with any, wishing to say or do nothing that should run contrary either to my duty or to my opinions and conscience; that as these motives had made me cease all communications with them, and with other foreigners, I could not renew them for the purpose of saying something which I did not believe. I added, jokingly, that I was certain His Majesty would not himself desire me to play such a part. My refusal did not appear to change the Emperor's good-humoured mood, for he seemed disposed to talk, and even invited me to do so.

"You may be sure," he said, "that I have no intention of sacrificing such great interests for a speculative re-establishment of Poland."

"Undoubtedly Your Majesty would not make war on Russia solely for the sake of Poland," I answered; "but rather that you should have no rival in Europe, and see there none but vassals."

I added that this occupied him much more than his Continental System, which could have been put rigorously into force from Archangel to Danzig as soon as the Emperor frankly imposed upon himself those privations and mortifications which he wished to demand from others. I added further that it would doubtless have a great effect against England, but that as he wished to attain this end only by making others pay the price of sacrifice, and as he would not and could not beyond a certain point suffer detriment to his own purse, he preferred a war which he hoped would put him in a position to demand, as master, sacrifices which hitherto he had had to obtain by example and persuasion.

Finally, I urged, he would not have gathered such forces in the North, to the detriment of the Spanish campaign, nor would have spent so much money in all sorts of preparations, if he had not been resolved to put them to some use, either for a political end or to satisfy his fondest passion.

"What passion is that?" asked the Emperor, laughing.

"War, Sire."

He tweaked my ear, with weak protests that it was not so. He then gave me free leave to say whatever I desired, and accepted with the utmost good humour everything I said. When I made a point, he pinched my ear again, giving me a gentle tap on the nape of my neck, especially when I seemed to him to be going rather far.

I told him that his desire was, if not for universal monarchy, at least for a supremacy which should be more than *primus inter pares*, and should place him in the position of demanding from others sacrifices which he would not be called upon to make himself, and this without allowing them the right of complaint or even of comment. This could only appear of momentary advantage to France; it had already resulted, and in time to come would result yet more, in provoking hostile opinion, ill-feeling and jealousy, which sooner or later were bound to end tragically for us, as a situation of this kind could not be forced upon the nations in the present century. He laughed heartily at what he called my philanthropy, and at my remarks about *primus inter pares*. He was in the best of humours, laughing very readily; he took no offence, and made some faint efforts to convince me that I was mistaken. He had the air of saying, "You're quite right; you've guessed correctly; but don't say anything about it. . . ."

The Emperor was at pains only to try to prove that he had never made any but political wars, in the interests of France, giving me to understand that the projected war, which he continually assured me was not yet decided upon, would be even more a matter of politics, and that it was actually in the interests of Europe, etc.

He added that France could not remain a great Power and enjoy great commercial prosperity and the influence that went

with it if England should preserve her own prosperity and maintain her usurpation of maritime rights, as he called her claims.

We discussed these points at length, touching also on my contention that the territories of France were already too far-flung, that all her gains beyond the Rhine could only prove a source of war and embarrassment for his son. His genius and his grandiose ideas embraced the whole world, I said; but the common sense of the human race, the ordinary mental capacity of men had, like the reasonable geography of the States of Europe, certain limits beyond which the prudence and foresight of mankind should not venture.

The Emperor was amused at my moderation, and even ridiculed it, though at the same time was pondering my remarks. I think so, at least; for during this part of the conversation he was often pensive and silent, like a man impressed by the truth. Nay, at moments, his bearing, his tone, voice and expression were those of one who welcomed the freedom with which I was speaking, a frankness to which sovereigns are so little accustomed.

The Emperor sought to persuade me that peace with England would mark the term of his ambition, and of the love of war for which he was reproached, and which, indeed, was solely the result of political clear-sightedness. He would then show himself more moderate than anyone expected. I agreed as to the real interest he had in forcing England to make peace, and as to the sacrifices needful to attain this end, but with this difference; that I thought it could be obtained by perseverance and the maintenance of peace on the Continent. I thought more lay in moderation and in a less threatening attitude on our part towards foreign Powers, while the Emperor could envisage nothing but the absolute submission of all those Powers to the measures he required. The harder the Emperor found it to persuade me, the more art and persistence he put forth to attain that end. His calculated wiles, and the language he used, would have made anyone believe that I was one of the powers whom he was so much concerned to win over.

I have often observed in him that care and persistence,

and am far from flattering myself that I was the occasion of it. He acted so towards all whom he wished to persuade, and he was always wanting to persuade someone.

I enter into all these details because they delineate his character; that is my sole purpose. I will even add that this persistence arose, I think, from the habit that he had but too firmly contracted, whether by reason of his power or on account of the real superiority of his genius and the ascendancy that it gave him, of either communicating his conviction to others or of imposing it upon them. Certain it is that to the success which he was accustomed to obtain thus must be attributed his predilection for interviews with sovereigns, and his habit of dealing in any particularly delicate and important matters directly with the ministers and ambassadors of foreign Powers. When he so wished, there could be a power of persuasion and fascination in his voice, his expression, his very manner, giving him an advantage over his interlocuter as great as the superiority and flexibility of his mind. Never was there a man more fascinating when he chose to be; to withstand him one had to realize, as I did, the political errors which lay concealed beneath this art. However prepared for him I might be, even when on my defence, he was often for a moment on the point of winning me to his opinion, and I only broke the spell because, like all curt and obstinate people, I remained on my own ground, maintaining only my own ideas and not heeding those of the Emperor. To avoid being carried away by the geniality which he often assumed when wishing to inspire confidence, to withstand the forceful arguments and reasoning of the Emperor, often specious but always clever and full of apt comparisons as useful to illustrate his own ideas as to conceal the end he wished to attain, one had to behave as if one did not understand what he was saying, and to repeat diligently to oneself in advance: "This is just; this is right; this only is in the interest of France, and therefore in the true interests of the Emperor." It was necessary to confine one's attention to the question as it appeared to oneself, and not to stray beyond the circle thus traced; above all, not to follow the

Emperor in his digressions, for he never failed to shift the centre of argument when he encountered opposition. Woe to him who admitted a single modification, for the adroit interlocuter led from concession to concession to the end he had in view, casting up a previous concession against you if you defended yourself, and assuming that it consequently implied the point you refused to concede. No woman was ever more artful than he in making you want, or agree to, his own desire when he thought it was to his interest to persuade, or merely wanted to do so. These reflections call to my mind what he once said on a similar occasion, which explains better than any other phrase could have done the price he was ready to pay for success :

"When I need anyone," he said, "I don't make too fine a point about it; I would kiss his . . ."

Once he had an idea implanted in his head, the Emperor was carried away by his own illusion. He cherished it, caressed it, became obsessed with it; one might say he exuded it from all his pores. By what means, then, did he strive to convey this illusion to others? If he sought to fascinate you, he was already fascinated before you. Never have a man's reason and judgment been more misguided, more led astray, more the victim of his imagination and passion than the reason and judgment of the Emperor on certain questions. He spared neither pain, care nor trouble to arrive at his end, and this applied as much to little things as to great. He was, one might say, totally given over to his object. He always applied all his means, all his faculties, all his attention on the action or discussion of the moment. Into everything he put passion. Hence the enormous advantage he had over his adversaries, for few people are entirely absorbed by one thought or one action at one moment. I hope I may be pardoned these reflections. I return to my conversation with the Emperor.

The Emperor's endeavours to prove to me that all his wars were for political purposes, that his only aim was peace with England, that all his projects were conformable to this and aimed at that goal, induced me to touch once more on the

great political questions relative to the project of war which I attributed to him on behalf of Poland. I said that I understood as well as he did, and that I had written to him to that effect when he might have had Poland's restoration in mind, that if it was to form a great buffer State in the centre of Europe, Poland was not in herself sufficient; it would be necessary to fashion that Power on a proper scale, with boundaries, a situation and an organization which would ensure general respect. I added that I understood perfectly well the utility of such a power, and that in consequence I considered any means admissible which would lead to that end, if he had had no other wars on his hands. This arrangement, I continued, could not but be agreeable to the ideas of England and Austria, according to my views; the Tsar Alexander, although he could not publicly agree to this project on account of his Polish provinces, was a man who could appreciate the wise political scope of such an arrangement; interest and honour would prevent him from giving up his portion of Poland without a struggle, but this war, fought at some other time, and with the acquiescence of Europe, would soon be over, and if it were waged for that purpose, it must be made clear that such was its purpose, so that Europe would regard it only as a fight for security. But for this purpose, I said, it would first be necessary to return Oldenburg to its prince; to restore Germany's independence, to give Illyria to Austria in exchange for Galicia,¹ perhaps to detach Saxony from the Confederation, to permit Poland no longer to belong to the Confederation or be a tributary like the Duchy of Warsaw. It would be essential to make an authentic and positive declaration of his views and principles, and of the end he had in view, to make Austria disinterested by restoring her outlets to the sea—in short to refashion the States of Europe with reasonable boundaries, and thus make a situation which would promise a future to everyone and prove conclusively that he desired nothing but an honourable peace with England, a peace that

¹ By the Treaty of Vienna, 1809, Austria had ceded a part of Galicia to the Duchy of Warsaw.

should be in the interests of all. I added that it was essential to take a firm and definite attitude with regard to Prussia, and to come to an understanding with the Great Powers that the buffer State should be ruled by a dynasty neither French, Russian nor Austrian: in fine, that this State should be entirely independent as regards its organization as well as its dynasty; and it seemed to me that a question of this importance, and an arrangement of this nature, would induce England to make peace more than would the Continental System, as offering a tranquil future to all cabinets, and so setting an example of moderation, even of sacrifice. This step, I told him, would conciliate general feeling towards him; this great political move ought to be made openly; and if this really was his object, it seemed to me so sweeping, so noble, so well calculated to immortalize his reign, that he ought to proclaim it, announcing his intentions to the world at large, and leaving nothing vague or likely to cast doubts on his good faith in carrying them out. All the mysterious ways of our existing political system, I continued, all the pin-pricks that were given, ostensibly to make one's adversary explain his intentions, but really to force him into a corner and make him the aggressor, would become out of date and useless; that in such an event I should esteem myself happy to be the agent, the verbal go-between for such a project; and I was prepared to be the intermediary at Petersburg, however little the cabinet there might relish the message I took them.

I concluded by saying that such a purpose, worthy as it was of the Emperor's genius, was the only thing which could make the Polish war intelligible to me; otherwise it seemed quite unreasonable, for a war in Russia, without a previous declaration of the freedom of Poland, without the loyal aid of Austria previously recompensed for the loss of Galicia by the cession of Illyria, without the secret assent of England, would be a very risky enterprise, presenting nothing but difficulties without any real advantage to compensate them; a hundred Russians slain beyond the Oder did not appear to me sufficient compensation for the death of a single Frenchman slain on the same field of battle, etc.

The Emperor listened to me with attention, but with occasional symptoms of impatience. I paused often, hoping that he would answer me, and that in touching on various details of this great question he would broach the matter. He answered only on the general lines of his previous remarks, adding ironically to his old refrain, "Austria ought to be delighted to hear what you say. In creating a kingdom for the King of Prussia, Alexander's friend, I should rouse too much laughter among the English. Don't you see that this would be playing their game?"

"I have not mentioned the King of Prussia," I answered. "The King of Saxony, or any other monarch, might rule this State. Who knows, in the arrangements for intervention, whether the Powers would not consent to have on the throne some prince of the Confederation or some other person agreeable to Your Majesty?"

Although my observations appeared to be little to the Emperor's taste, yet I reflected that I had already said too much to stop at that point, and that the Emperor would do well to realize that no one was hoodwinked by our policy. So I added:

"If your Majesty does not act on these lines, I ought to say frankly that everyone in Europe, as in France, will see that the war in Russia or Poland for which you are preparing is not in order to create a buffer State, as Your Majesty would have us believe, but for some purpose for which that is merely the pretext."

I added that over and above all this there would be no need to make this war against Russia if he foresaw nothing but the difficulties of establishing this buffer State on a scale that should make it really independent.

The Emperor seemed a little piqued and said, as he invariably did when a matter was broached that displeased him: "I am not asking your advice."

Nevertheless he led the conversation round to the topic of Russia. He went into each question in detail, spoke of every grievance as though he were going over each step with his cabinet and seeking to explain himself and win agreement.

Once again I repeated to His Majesty that in order to persuade the Tsar to make fresh commercial sacrifices, and to make him determined to await the desired satisfaction with regard to the Prince of Oldenburg, it seemed to me that it would be necessary to make a formal engagement to place North Germany in its old position, once peace were made. For the moment no licences should be granted, nor should the monopoly of the State, as the Tsar called it, be exercised at the expense of the subject, if the intention was that no more neutrals should be admitted.

I reminded him that these licences, given to our vessels to enable them to go to England, had made Russia decide to receive neutrals, and that the Tsar wished to see us accept the same privations that others suffered, and thus be assured of our future intentions.

As the Emperor still seemed anxious that I should see Prince Kurakin, I told him that I would not be a party to deceiving anyone, least of all the Tsar, by taking a step that would amount to trickery, for I no longer had any authority to speak of affairs. All these preparations would be a misfortune for France and a matter for regret and embarrassment to the Emperor himself, and I had no wish to give myself cause for reproach for having contributed to it. The Emperor turned his back on me, saying drily that I understood nothing about policy, and thereupon left me.

I continued to live in retirement, maintaining the utmost reserve. I saw no Russians, and even avoided meeting Prince Kurakin. More than a month had passed without my seeing any of them, when the Emperor had another conversation with me, shortly before his departure. Once again he returned to his supposed grievances. This time his conversation seemed to show what was really in his mind. The Emperor could no longer make pretences about his plans for departure, but he still tried to persuade me that he neither wished to establish Poland nor to have any kind of war, but hoped that everything would be cleared up and arranged without coming to blows.

We used the same arguments on each side and talked

from the same premises. I further urged all my beliefs as to the inconveniences, not to say the dangers of such a distant expedition which would keep him away from France so long. I spoke of how he was continually being reproached for running such risks, for gambling with such splendid and mighty destinies, when he could exercise a great and powerful influence from his desk in the Tuileries. I mentioned the effect in France of risks forced on the youth of the nation, no longer, as aforetime, confined exclusively to the lower orders of society. I represented to him how he had already been condemned in this connection for the War in Spain, and the danger of going far away before its termination. I told him that it was in Spain that he should first strike, if he persisted in his desire for this unfortunate war with Russia. I described the country to him, the climate, the advantage the enemy would have in allowing him to advance and wear himself out by marching without the chance to fight. I reminded him of the words of the Tsar which I had already reported. I also recalled to him the privations and discontent of the troops during his last campaign in Poland. To all my arguments his reply was that *I had turned a Russian, and that I understood nothing of affairs.*

"But if I understand nothing, Sire," I retorted with a smile, "why does Your Majesty do me the honour of discussing affairs with me? I can do nothing in this matter except through love of my country and attachment to your person. Such noble sentiments cannot lead me into error and keep me in error so long. Your Majesty is not so gracious towards those who are not of your opinion that you can imagine that it is amusing to contradict you; indeed, such a course, so far as my friends and myself are concerned, has not been so successful as to encourage me to continue it. It must therefore be a matter of conscience and conviction. Your Majesty is carried away by false reports. You are confused and deluded as to the dangers of the course you are taking. You think you are pushing forward to a great and politic objective, and I am convinced that you are mistaken."

The Emperor replied with warmth that it was the Tsar

of Russia who desired war; M. de Lauriston had informed him that all the Russian armies were on the march, even those from the Turkish frontier; the soft words of the Emperor Alexander had befogged me. He said that he had known of Russia's hostile intentions only when he sent another ambassador, who informed him by every courier that the English were trading openly in Petersburg, and that there had even been an attempt to rob M. de Longuerue,¹ the aide-de-camp, of the despatches which M. de Lauriston had forwarded to him.

The Emperor was doubtless unaware that I had seen young M. de Longuerue, and knew all about his adventure.

This young officer, travelling as a courier in a heavy barouche which was making slow progress through the sand, had quarrelled with a Russian courier whose light *kibitk* overtook him. The Frenchman thought he had the same right in Russia as in France to stop the Russian from passing him; the other, staunch in his rights as a government courier and with his lighter equipage, urged his postilion forward, easily overtaking and passing M. de Longuerue's carriage, which was half-stuck in the mud. In a fury, M. de Longuerue fired his pistols at the Russian, who paid as little heed to the other's shots as to his threats. At Riga the governor intervened, pointing out to the young Frenchman

¹ Gabriel François de Hatte, Marquis de Longuerue, born at Vigan (Gard), April 17, 1778, died at Valence, October 6, 1852. He entered the Service February 7, 1804 with an appointment to the Staff in the camp at Saint-Omer. Lieutenant, June 2, 1804, he served as aide-de-camp to Lauriston from October 26, 1804 to October 1, 1805. Captain, April 12, 1808, aide-de-camp to Arrighi, May 10, 1808, he was selected as aide-de-camp by Lauriston and promoted Major, March 26, 1811. After serving as major in a cavalry regiment, he returned to Lauriston as aide-de-camp, June 18, 1813, was promoted Brigadier-General, June 16, 1834, and retired June 8, 1848. Lauriston had sent him with despatches from Petersburg to Paris on March 27, 1812. On April 4th the Ambassador wrote to Champagny: "Silence is still maintained as to the arrest of Speranski and Magnitsky. This silence gives rise to countless conjectures, the cause of it has been attributed to foreign influence. Some suppose complicity with England; others with France. To prove this last assertion it is spread about, especially in commercial circles, that M. de Longuerue, my aide-de-camp, whom I despatched three days before M. Speranski's arrest, has been arrested at Dorpat, and that in his possession had been found the Russian army's plan of campaign." (Lauriston to Champagny, April 4, 1812, in the Grand-Duke Nicholas Mikhailovitch's *Relations*, VI, 254.)

the irregularity of his conduct, and, out of regard for his position as a bearer of government despatches, let the impetuous young man proceed. But the governor reported the matter to his Court, and M. de Lauriston was so incensed at the conduct of his aide-de-camp that he dismissed him. This is what the Emperor cited to me as an attack against one of his couriers for the purpose of robbing him of his despatches.

During this conversation with the Emperor I noticed that he was more thoughtful than usual. Some of my reflections seemed to have impressed him more than he was willing to show. The arrival of the Duke of Bassano, who was announced as bringing despatches from Vienna, interrupted this conversation, which I felt that the Emperor wished to prolong. He dismissed me, and doubtless resumed in another conversation the irresistible course of fatality which was drawing him forward.

By this time the Emperor had already taken his decision. Austria had practically consented to become his ally, and Prussia had had no alternative but to lay up a rod for her own back.

Some days after my last conversation with the Emperor he had sent off a portion of the Household. Horses and carriages were already on the way to Dresden, ostensibly for the interview with the Emperor of Austria.

It will now be as well to pick up the thread of events of greater importance than those I have recounted, those, at least, in which I took part, or in which I was led to play a role.

Towards the end of winter¹ the Emperor had begun to treat M. de Talleyrand better, and even had several conversations with him. One evening he kept him very late, much to the alarm of Madame de Bassano, who saw in Talleyrand a successor to her husband.² The Emperor, who knew her anxiety and felt that it was even communicated to his minister, recounted to him what he had proposed a few days previously to M. de Talleyrand, namely, to go to Warsaw

¹ March, 1812.

² The Duke of Bassano was at that time Minister for Foreign Affairs.

and take charge of affairs there during the expedition, at the same time keeping a watch on Vienna and Germany. M. de Talleyrand had accepted this mission. The Emperor also told the Duke of Bassano, and repeated to me later, that M. de Talleyrand would have served him very well with the Poles, and even in Courland with his niece's mother,¹ if the campaign had met with the success for which he hoped.

The fact is that M. de Talleyrand, delighted to enter once more into affairs, did not speak to a single person of the project which the Emperor had communicated to him under the seal of secrecy, but he opened a credit of 60,000 francs at Vienna,² since there was not, as he afterwards explained, any direct exchange between Paris and Warsaw, and he did not wish to find himself embarrassed or hampered at the moment of his arrival. The Emperor, though he had at the time recovered from his first anger with him, later attributed this act, as did the public, to M. de Talleyrand's desire to indicate to Vienna that he was once more entering affairs. But as soon as he was informed, either by the Paris postal officials or the police, of what M. de Talleyrand had done, and learned furthermore that the salons were discussing his selection of an envoy, he became furious with the Prince, on whom he laid the blame of this indiscretion.

Had it not been for the Duke of Rovigo he would have been banished, for orders to that effect were twice given to the Duke.³

The Emperor told me of this alleged indiscretion on the part of M. de Talleyrand without going into his plans about him. He spoke of this story of credits opened in Vienna and the news divulged in Paris as an intrigue designed to make himself important, and told me that he was going to banish him. It was not without some trouble that this storm was calmed. The Emperor then added:

"Talleyrand was a fool to leave the ministry, for he

¹ The Duchess of Courland, mother of the Duchess of Dino.

² See Meneval, *Napoléon et Marie-Louise*, I, 324; A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, III, 443; *Mémoires du duc de Rovigo*, Garner's edition, IV, 45; Lacour-Gayet, *Talleyrand*, II, 311.

³ The Duke of Rovigo makes no allusion to these orders in his memoirs.

would still have been conducting affairs, whilst his impotence is killing him. At heart he regrets being no longer a minister and is intriguing to get money. Those about him are always as needy as himself, and will do anything to get cash. He wishes it to be believed that I cannot dispense with him, but my affairs have not gone any the worse since he ceased to have a hand in them. He has too easily forgotten that it was the battles won by the French which dictated the treaties that he signed. No one in Europe doubts that. Talleyrand's wit pleases me; he can see things, he is a profound politician, far superior to Maret, but he is an inveterate intriguer, and is surrounded by rascals, and that has always displeased me."

I defended M. de Talleyrand, pointing out to the Emperor that the desire he ascribed to him of wishing to return to active politics was the best proof that he had not committed the indiscretion with which he was reproached, that he was not the man to boast beforehand of going to Vienna, if only out of caution with regard to the relations of his niece's family, for he knew the Emperor too well to be indiscreet, and was far too clever to be suspected of such a useless piece of stupidity or indiscretion. I added that there must be some intrigue of which the Emperor knew nothing, and that he would learn of it by summoning M. de Talleyrand.

"I do not wish to see him," said the Emperor. "I am going to give orders for him to be turned out of Paris. I forbid you to go to his house or speak to him about the matter."

The Emperor then questioned me as to a possible choice of his successor. As I named no one, he put forward several names, and among the number that of the Abbé de Pradt.¹

It is as well to record the truth about events in this affair of M. de Talleyrand, for it was this which drove him to extremities—possibly with good reason.

M. de Bassano, knowing from the Emperor his opinion of M. de Talleyrand, and not concealing from himself the fact that the latter's understanding and method of handling

¹ At Dresden on May 24th, the Archbishop of Malines was designated Ambassador at Warsaw. His instructions bear the date May 28, 1812. "In default of Talleyrand he (Napoleon) chose a caricature of him." (A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I.*)

affairs were agreeable to the Emperor, had no doubt whatever that within three months he would be entrusted once again, if he succeeded in exercising the least influence. With this in mind, the Duke mentioned it to his wife on his return, and she lost no time in beseeching a friend to divulge the secret of M. de Talleyrand's mission, allowing it to be understood that the details had been divulged by M. de Talleyrand himself in a moment of confidence.¹

The Emperor's mood as regards M. de Talleyrand made his fall easy. M. de Rambuteau, the Emperor's chamberlain,² circulated the news of his indiscretion. Informed by the police of the gossip in the salons, the Emperor was furious with the Prince. The particulars of the credit at Vienna, obtained through the secret of the post, appeared to the Emperor as one more proof of his indiscretion, and irritated His Majesty still more. M. de Bassano triumphed, and M. de Talleyrand, who really avoided banishment by a miracle, was deeper in disgrace than ever.

It was well known that the Emperor was quick to accept his first impressions, and that had M. de Talleyrand been justified, the Emperor would have been slow to go back on his word. The departure was to take place in a few days, so the desired end had been gained. Not content with this success, a playlet was produced in the salon of M. de Bassano into which M. de Talleyrand was brought. The wits in the lovely duchess's boudoir attempted to ridicule his pretended love of peace. Some living caricatures were presented, and I likewise had the honour of being portrayed in one of the liveliest of these diversions. I was presented as a so-called automaton, a puppet made by the *Lame Enchanter* to repeat on all occasions, "*Peace makes for the happiness of nations.*"

The inner circle of those who frequented the Foreign

¹ According to the Countess of Kielmannsegge whose memoirs, it is true, must be accepted with caution, the indiscretion on the subject of the projected mission, was committed by Madame de Laval and M. de Narbonne (*Mémoires de la Comtesse de Kielmannsegge*, published by Joseph Delage, I, 140.)

² The future Prefect of the Seine, Claude Philibert Barthelot de Rambuteau (1781-1869) was Chamberlain to the Emperor from 1809. In 1811 he had been sent on a mission to Westphalia, and was successively Prefect of Simplicon, Loire, and Seine.

Affairs salon were regaled with these farces for some days, and they only ceased because public opinion was against these humorists, and because, through the police, the Emperor heard rumours of what was going on. It was this intrigue which caused M. de Talleyrand to be no longer considered, and led definitely to the choice of M. de Pradt. As this was a choice not without its influence on our affairs I felt it necessary to enter into all these details.

The Emperor left Paris on May 9th, and on the 10th reached Mayence,¹ where he spent two days. One evening he sent for me, and engaged in another long conversation on the same topic as before. Here, as in Paris, he sought with particular care to convince me that he did not desire war, that it was a mistake to be alarmed, that everything would be straightened out. I always replied with the same pleas, and the Emperor listened without annoyance to the reflections which might have greatly displeased him. It was not enough for him to have the weapons of power and force; he desired also to have the weapon of opinion.

Having spoken of Russia, of the assistance of Austria, "completely in my system," he said, "through the folly of the Russian cabinet which had stood on its dignity and refused Austria's mediation, and even her good offices in regard to our differences," he then reiterated, as usual, that he did not want war, that an understanding and arrangement were possible if the Tsar Alexander so wished.²

¹ Caulaincourt is mistaken by a day. On the night of the 9th Napoleon and Marie Louise slept at Châlons-sur-Marne. They arrived at Metz on the 10th set out at two o'clock in the morning of the 11th, and reached Mayence the same day at nine o'clock in the evening. The Emperor put up at the Artillery School, and stayed in Mayence until dawn on the 13th.

² The gigantic undertaking of the Russian campaign had already given such food for thought to everyone, especially to men with some foresight, that many people thought it must end in a colossal disaster, or anyhow in events that no precautions could provide against. Men who were already plotting or who, never having ceased to desire another order of things, still entertained ideas of a restoration, felt that it could only lead to conditions such as to strengthen their hopes. Certain it is that M. de Semonville, being in the month of May with M. de Capelle, at that time Prefect of Geneva, and seeing the numbers of battalions marching through to the north of Germany, remarked, "All those passing by are lost; they will not return." M. de Capelle, all the more astounded because he was accustomed to believe in the Emperor's fortune, expressed his doubts. The discussion grew lively, and M. de Semonville demonstrated that it was im-

Then he spoke of the Turks, and of the Swedes. He complained much of M. de Bassano, accusing him of want of foresight. He said that he was not served properly; that the Minister for Foreign Affairs only went as far as he was pushed; that M. de Bassano had no head; that everything fell on himself; that Sweden ought to have been in arms three months before in order to profit by the chance of reconquering Finland; that the Turks ought to have 200,000 men on the Danube; that anybody but M. de Bassano would have made them unfurl the standard of Mohammed two months ago; that those two Powers, Sweden and Turkey, would never again have such a splendid opportunity of recovering what Russia had taken from them; that their inaction was a grave political mistake; and that his lack of prompt co-operation from their forces at this moment was the fault of M. de Bassano. He said that *the minister would be responsible to France for this*; that half the campaign ought to have been fought by this minister, but that he had hardly given it a thought, though he had been rebuked for it.

The Emperor seemed in an exceedingly bad temper and highly displeased with the Duke. I raised the objection that it was not usual "*to act without His Majesty's orders; that he would not approve.*" I went on, that as he continued to repeat that he did not want war, the cabinets of Sweden and Turkey had feared to go too far and compromise themselves; that his minister had doubtless not dared to act too openly for fear of disclosing too soon projects which he himself was still denying; finally, that the Swedish prince had too much at stake, so far as his personal interest was concerned, not to be very circumspect. Again I represented to the Emperor that the peace between Russia and Turkey had long depended on the cabinet at Petersburg; I was convinced that Russia possible for such an enterprise to end in anything but disaster and culminate in events that would change the aspect of everything. From this he concluded that circumstances must necessarily lead to favourable opportunities for the Bourbons, that the difficulty of making another choice and the trend of affairs, together with their inoffensive position with regard to everybody, must bring them forward again. The fact of this conversation was assured to me by someone who had kept a note of it from M. de Capelle since 1813. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

would have signed it if she had so wished, and would sign it when she desired; and it was because she had as yet no news that she had delayed to do so.¹ I repeated to him, what he must have been informed in despatches, that the Tsar Alexander had no wish to make war against him, and that he was possibly still in doubt as to whether the Emperor Napoleon had finally decided to commence hostilities.

"This reflection," I added, "cannot have escaped Your Majesty. It is an irrefutable proof that the Tsar's plans are defensive and have never been offensive, for he would certainly have begun by making peace with the Turks, if he had wished for war with Your Majesty, even were it only to have his own troops at his disposal."

The Emperor was silent for some moments, like a man who was reflecting and feeling the justness of my observations. He then said with some warmth that he was sure of the Turks, that perhaps they would not make a powerful diversion, but that they would certainly not sign the peace; they were well aware of what was in preparation, and clumsy as they might be in political matters, they were not blind when it came to matters of such great importance, and in any case they were not without hints of what was afoot.

"As for Bernadotte," he said, "he is quite capable of forgetting that he is a Frenchman by birth, but the Swedes are too energetic and too enlightened to lose such an opportunity of revenge for all the injuries they have received since the days of Peter the Great."

The Emperor reverted more than once to his hopes of the Turks.

"Andréossy will wake them up,"² he said. "His arrival will have caused a great sensation."

I raised the objection that he had only just started.

"That is Maret's fault. I can't do everything."

He repeated what he had already said to me about the Duke of Bassano, adding that he would be responsible to

¹ The peace between Russia and Turkey was signed at Bucharest, May 28, 1812, subject to ratification by the sovereigns.

² General Antoine François Andréossy (1761-1828) designated in April to proceed to Turkey as ambassador.

THE TURKS

France for all the harm that might result from his lack of foresight.¹

It is said that we went to Dresden by way of Bamberg to avoid the German princelings.² The truth is that the Emperor wanted to avoid Weimar.³ He kept on saying, and the Court repeated it after him, that he did not want war. Rumours were purposely spread of an interview with the Tsar Alexander, and attempts were made to find confirmation of these rumours in the mission of M. de Narbonne, who was sent to that sovereign's court.⁴

¹ The Emperor was unfair in complaining of the delay in sending Count Andréossy to Constantinople for, wishing above all things to prolong the Russian cabinet's sense of security and at the same time to conceal his own plans, he had not sent Andréossy's final instructions until the moment of his own departure, and even instructed him to stay at Laibach, where he arrived about June 8th. The Emperor thought he had set the Porte in motion, and sufficiently indicated his own intentions by the article concerning it in the treaty of a hundred clauses with Austria. It was on May 28th that peace was signed at Bucharest between Russia and Turkey. The Pruth became the boundary between the two States, and by this peace treaty Russia acquired Bessarabia and the portion of Moldavia lying on the left bank of the Pruth. Russia ratified the treaty on June 23rd, the Porte not until July 14th. The Sultan was furious at the treaty when he learned of our advance, but English influence and the traditional fidelity of the Turks to their engagements carried the point in the Divan. It was not until the end of June that M. Andréossy received orders to continue his journey. He made all haste but could not reach Constantinople before July 25th. It is to be noted that the peace with Turkey was signed sooner than the Russian cabinet hoped for, as Prince Kutusoff, charged with the negotiations and being Commandant in Moldavia, having learned that he had been replaced by Admiral Tchitchagoff, who was on his way thither, took upon himself to end the negotiations and thus rob his successor of the honour. The Russian cabinet, which had been so tardy in performing its part, did not remain inactive as soon as it found the matter decided, for almost at the same time, on July 20th at Velikuliki, it concluded an offensive and defensive treaty with the Spanish Cortes. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*) By the treaty of a hundred clauses Caulaincourt means the treaty of March 14, 1812, between France and Austria.

² All the same, this did not stop the princes from hurrying to meet him, "bowed," according to A. Vandal in his *Napoléon et Alexandre I.*, in an attitude of adoration. The sovereigns of Anhalt and Hesse Darmstadt; the King of Würtemberg, and the Grand-Duke of Baden at Würzburg; Dukes William and Pius of Bavaria, at Bamberg.

³ The Grand Duke of Weimar was the Tsar's brother-in-law.

⁴ M. de Narbonne was at Berlin, charged with superintending the execution of the treaty with Prussia, when he received orders to go to Wilna, where Napoleon supposed that Alexander was staying. Narbonne bore a note from the Duke of Bassano to Rumiantsof, and a letter from Napoleon to Alexander, both written on May 3rd, but antedated April 30th. (*Correspondance*, 18669.) Narbonne arrived at Wilna on May 18th, was received the same day by Alexander, and started on the 19th, to be at Dresden on the 26th, where he gave Napoleon an account of his mission.

Dresden was reached on the 16th, the night of the 15th being passed at Wurzburg, the 14th at Bayreuth and the 15th at Plauen.¹

The Emperor and all those attached to the ministry were at pains to give a tinge of moderation to our conduct, our views and our actions that should put appearances on our side and so impress Austria. To this end particular care was taken to appear conciliatory and moderate; efforts were also made to induce a false sense of security in those whom it was desired to attack.

The Emperor had travelled with the Empress. For six weeks the whole countryside had been working to repair the roads we had to follow. The King and Queen of Saxony had preceded their Majesties to Plauen.² There was a torch-light procession at our entrance into Dresden, where the Austrian Court arrived two days later.³ Not having taken any part in affairs, I had not sufficient positive knowledge of what passed at that interview to enable me to relate it in detail.

The Emperor set things in motion to circumvent M. Metternich, and especially to see that there should be echoes about his moderation, and his anxiety to obtain, through M. de Narbonne, the explanations which the Tsar of Russia had refused to Austria so as to effect a general conciliation without recourse to hostilities. For the first, and perhaps the last time, the Emperor spoke very well of M. Metternich. For my part, I lived in a very retired way, carefully avoiding any occasion of discussing affairs since I could not do so in the sense desired by the Emperor. I only saw the Austrians

¹ The *Archives de Caulaincourt* contain a curious document. It is in the handwriting of a secretary, but it is undoubtedly, if not the actual notes of the Master of Horse himself, at least those of one of his officials who attended Napoleon wherever he went. This paper gives the Emperor's itinerary from May 9, 1812 to October 11, 1812.

² Caulaincourt is slightly mistaken here. Actually the King and Queen of Saxony were waiting for Napoleon and Marie Louise not at Plauen but at Freyberg, eight leagues from Dresden. They had arrived there on May 15th, and the King did not like to go to bed for fear of not being up when the Emperor should arrive.

³ The Emperor and Empress of Austria, accompanied by Metternich, arrived at Dresden at one o'clock in the afternoon of the 18th.

at the State functions at night. Like all the high officials of the Court, I had the honour of dining with their Majesties. After dinner the Emperor of Austria made a tour of the room, chatting for a few moments with everyone. My turn came one day, as I was talking to the Duke of Istria in the embrasure of a window. The Emperor Francis spoke of the Emperor Alexander and told me that that prince was wrong not to explain himself, as thereby he might have avoided a rupture. He himself had done all he could to explain away the various differences that existed, but the Russians had not wanted him; yet, after what the Emperor Napoleon had said to him he was ready to listen and even still disposed to act as a mediator. Russia had not replied to Vienna's offer of intervention any more than she had to France's, and this silence had a bad effect. The inference could be drawn that at Petersburg they were ready to run all the risks of war, and even wished for it; and in that way one could be dragged into making war when one could have avoided it. He added, that I must be well acquainted with the Tsar Alexander. He had been represented to him as a prince of rather undecided character, susceptible to influence, but in matters of such consequence he ought to rely upon himself and, above all, not wage war until he had exhausted every means for preserving peace.

I replied that in my opinion he had been misjudged. For some time he had, no doubt wrongly, an unfounded mistrust of his own means, dependent on his good and conscientious intentions. This mistrust might well have misled people as to his character and made him seem weak, or, rather, undecided. I was ignorant of what had happened since I had left Petersburg, but I was still convinced that he did not wish for war, and would wage it only with extreme reluctance. I considered him obstinate when a question had been decided, and as this was the case, I was sure that he would never give way. I added that we had now reached a juncture, His Majesty being at Dresden with the Emperor Napoleon, when war seemed to me inevitable. "It is very unfortunate," replied the Emperor of Austria. He then spoke

of other things, of the Emperor's love of riding, about horses, etc., and there the conversation ended.

Was this a considered opinion, resulting from what our cabinet had said, or merely the consequence of some lingering irritation about the campaign of 1809? I leave the reader to judge. For my own part, if I can judge from what came to me of all that was said and done, I should say that the Emperor of Austria and his ministers seemed to believe firmly that Russia could have averted war by making the explanations they had refused and by a little real severity at the moment against the trade with pretended neutrals.

Russia betrayed, indeed, a certain arrogance in not entering into explanations with the cabinet of Vienna and so annoyed the latter. If this conduct showed a certain dignity it also showed clumsiness, as it carried the day for us in public opinion, and so played into our hands. It was then that M. de Rumiantsof sent the note of Prince Kurakin which the Emperor Napoleon found so imperious.¹ M. de Rumiantsof recalled that their grievances were so well known, our *wrongdoings and bad faith* so notorious, that it was mockery to require an explanation from them when it was for Russia to demand satisfaction from us; that any explanations which they might give would suggest embarrassment and fear, and would serve no purpose if the Emperor Napoleon had made his decision, whereas, if he had not done so, their silence would bear a character of dignity appropriate to a great Power which in these circumstances was strong in her rectitude. Recriminations should be left to those who were weak or afraid. The Tsar Alexander, and M. de Rumiantsof still more so, believed that the whole intention was to intimidate them, and oblige them to agree to new claims. They were convinced that at heart the Emperor Napoleon could not have resolved to start a war and sacrifice to that the results already obtained by the Continental System, which, although relaxed in some respects, still wounded England in

¹ On April 30th Prince Kurakin remitted a declaration, drawn up from a note of April 8th that Rumiantsof had sent him, and which had reached him on the 24th of that month. Cf. A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, III, 382; and Fain, *Manuscrit 1812*, 1827, 1. 140, *et seq.*

her most cherished interests. This would explain the delay in signing the peace with the Turks and the admission of the English.

M. de Narbonne, who had been sent to Wilna to the Tsar Alexander, arrived back at Dresden. The Emperor instructed him to see M. Metternich and tell the Emperor of Austria what he wished to be known about his mission.

The Emperor, who thought that the part he had taken in the marriage of the Archduchess Marie Louise,¹ his reputation as a man of intelligence, and his relations with Prince Schwarzenberg, would render M. de Narbonne particularly agreeable to the Austrian Court, had chosen him expressly for this mission, thinking that whatever he said would have more effect on the mind of his father-in-law.

M. de Narbonne came to see me and told me what the Tsar had said to him, what he had observed, and what he had loyally reported to the Emperor Napoleon, who had instructed him to repeat it in part to the Emperor of Austria and M. Metternich.

I note, more or less, M. de Narbonne's exact words, for I wrote them down at the time; and this conversation having been repeated to me several times by him, I have been able to verify the accuracy of my notes.

The Tsar Alexander had welcomed him cordially. He had been welcomed by everyone; their general bearing was appropriate to the occasion, dignified but not boastful. He attended two reviews. The troops appeared to be a fine body of men. M. de Rumiantsof was not there at the time of his arrival. From the outset the Tsar had spoken to him frankly:

"I shall not be the first to draw the sword. I have no wish to be saddled, in the eyes of Europe, with the responsibility of the blood that will be shed in this war. For eighteen

¹ In the course of a visit to Vienna, after the Peace of 1809, on his return from Trieste where he had visited the French princesses, M. de Narbonne had received overtures from Metternich regarding the marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise, although the divorce with Josephine had not yet been pronounced. In his *Mémoires* (III, 204) Rovigo has doubted the part taken by Narbonne in the marriage, but Frédéric Masson (*L'Impératrice Marie-Louise*, p. 43) expressed his belief in Metternich's proposal. Caulaincourt's text confirms the latter historian's opinion.

months I have been threatened. The French army is three hundred leagues from its own country and actually on my frontiers, whereas I am on my own territory. Vital points on my frontiers are being fortified and armed; arms are being sent up; the Poles are being incited; an outcry is being raised that I harbour neutrals and admit Americans, while all the time the Emperor is selling licences in France, admitting vessels that are being used to carry freights from England. The Emperor is swelling his fiscal receipts and ruining some of his unfortunate subjects. I have declared, following the principle, that I have no intention of doing this. I cannot take money from the pockets of my subjects to put into my own. The Emperor Napoleon and his agents declare that I favour England, and do not carry out the measures of the Continental System. If this were true, would sixty or eighty ships have been seized as contraband? Do you imagine that the English have not been knocking at my door in every way they could? Had I wished, I could have had ten English agents for every one that I have had; but I have not so much as listened to them. Three hundred thousand French troops are ready to cross my frontier, though I am still in the alliance and faithful to all the engagements I have made. When I change, I will do so openly. Ask Caulaincourt what I said to him when the Emperor Napoleon deviated from the alliance, and what I told him on his departure. Caulaincourt is a man of honour, and not a man to be imposed upon. As I was then, so I am to-day, whatever the Emperor Napoleon may have done to break our friendly relations. He is raising Austria, Prussia, all Europe in arms against Russia; yet I am still in the alliance, so firmly has my reason forbidden me to believe that he would wish to sacrifice real advantages to the hazards of this war. I am under no illusions. I render too much justice to his military talents not to have calculated all the risks that an appeal to arms may involve for us, but, having done all I could to preserve peace honourably and uphold a political system which might lead to universal peace, I will do nothing to besmirch the honour of the nation over which I rule. The

Russian nation is not one to shrink from danger. All the bayonets in Europe waiting at my frontiers will not make me speak otherwise. My patience and moderation come not from weakness, but from the duty of a sovereign to heed no feelings of resentment, to envisage nothing but the peace and welfare of his people in questions of such far-reaching importance, and when he can hope to avert a struggle which must cost them so many sacrifices. Can the Emperor Napoleon, in all good faith, demand explanations when, in a time of total peace, he invades the North of Germany, when he fails to observe the engagements of the alliance and carry out the principles of his Continental System? Is it not he who should explain his motives? I sent a frankly worded note by Prince Kurakin. My grievances are known to all Europe; it is an insult to the intelligence of everyone to imply that there are secrets. Even now I am ready to come to any understanding which will preserve peace; but it must be in writing, in a form that will show on which side good faith and justice lie."

The Tsar, moreover, told him that at the moment of speaking he was under no engagement contrary to the alliance, that he was strong in the rights and justice of his cause, and that he would defend himself if attacked. He concluded by spreading out a map of Russia and pointing to the farthest limits of the country.

"If the Emperor Napoleon is determined on war," he said, "and if fortune does not smile on our just cause, his hunt for peace will take him to the uttermost ends."

He then said once again that he would not fire the first shot, but also that he would sheath the sword last.

M. de Narbonne further told me that during his stay at Wilna the Tsar Alexander had always spoken to him in this sense, unaffectedly and without ill feeling, not even showing any bitterness towards the Emperor Napoleon personally; he had also spoken of myself with great esteem and kindness. M. de Narbonne seemed quite content with all that the sovereign had said, and was convinced of the truth of his arguments. He added that the Emperor Napoleon seemed to

be impressed by the report made to him, though he kept on complaining of the Tsar's falseness, and constantly returned to his chapter of grievances against him.

The King of Prussia and the Crown Prince, whom the Emperor had wished to meet in Dresden for the purpose of some kind of public reconciliation which would guarantee the satisfactory and free co-operation of Prussia, arrived in Dresden.¹ Some thought that the Emperor would not treat the King well, for he did not like him and always observed, when speaking of him, "He is merely a drill sergeant, a blockhead." But the Emperor made his good humour wait on his interest, and at the moment it was very much to his interest to persuade the King that he was admitting him freely into the political system of France, and had no hidden motives of hostility. The King and the Crown Prince left delighted with the welcome they had received.

¹ Frederick William III arrived in Dresden on May 26th, at 11 a.m. His son, the Crown Prince (Frederick William IV), arrived on the following day.

CHAPTER III

TOWARDS MOSCOW

THE Emperor left Dresden on May 29th; the Empress was at Prague, where she had gone to pass a short time with the Austrian Court. The Emperor Napoleon only spent one night at Glogau. Until June 1st he remained at Posen, from the 2nd to the 6th at Thorn, from the 7th to the 10th at Danzig, the 11th at Marienburg, from the 12th to the 16th at Königsberg, the 17th at Insterburg, from the 18th to the 21st at Gumbinnen, the 21st at Wilkowschki, the 22nd at Naugaraidski, the 23rd under canvas on the bank of the Niemen.

I return to the Emperor's stay at Danzig, for that was the great army depot, the place where everything had been organized and prepared during the last two years, and to which the Emperor devoted the greatest attention, for it was the strong point which had to supply all his needs. The King of Naples, who had not received permission to repair to Dresden, ostensibly out of regard for the Emperor of Austria, was waiting there for the Emperor Napoleon. On the score that his father-in-law always had Italy much at heart, Napoleon pretended that he did not wish to mar his pleasure at seeing his daughter again by the sight of a sovereign who would only recall painful memories. The truth is that that was a very convenient pretext. The Emperor remarked in confidence that he did not want Murat to establish relations with the Austrians, with whom too many ties already existed between the Queen and Metternich.¹ "Murat's head will be turned if the Emperor of Austria treats him well, and he will be certain to talk all sorts of nonsense," etc.

¹ There was no longer any secret about the relations between Caroline and Metternich.

There was complete coldness between the Emperor and the King of Naples, and the refusal to allow him to go to Dresden only served to increase the latter's discontent. The Emperor rightly reproached him with having frequently evaded the Continental System along the coasts of the Kingdom of Naples and had written and talked impressively on the subject. Being now in need of the King on his campaign, he had to do everything to please him. The King was petulant, but weak. He was fond of the Emperor, who was aware of the ascendancy he had over him. Good relations were established at the first conversation, though the Emperor had repeated that morning what he had already said before he left Paris, that the King had forgotten he was a Frenchman by birth, and that his brother-in-law had made him a king. For his part, the King complained openly that he was a sovereign only in name, that he was called upon to sacrifice the interests of his people to what the Emperor called the interests of the Continent and of France (expressions which were conveyed to the Emperor and incensed him even more than the question of contraband).

The Emperor Napoleon's first words to General Rapp, Governor of Danzig, were:

"What are your merchants doing with all their money? War is going to start. Now I will look after them myself."¹

In the course of a conversation after dinner, he remarked to Rapp, the King of Naples and several other persons that the Prussians and even the Austrians would make common cause with us, that Alexander did not expect this, and would be greatly embarrassed, although he had wanted the war. He added that if Alexander really did not want war he could still avert it, but the situation would be clarified in a few days.² It could easily be seen that this talk was designed to be repeated by all the political echoes. The Emperor's real

¹ "He opened the conversation with me by an amusing question. 'What are the Danzig men doing with their money, with what they are making, and what I am spending for their benefit?' I replied that their situation was far from prosperous, that they were suffering and in a tight corner. 'That will all be changed,' he replied, 'that is an understood thing; I will take care of them myself.'" *Mémoires de General Rapp*, p. 163.

² *Mémoires de Rapp*, p. 164, confirms this story.

wishes were expressed in the first remarks when he saw Rapp, uttered in the presence of myself and several other persons.

That evening and the next morning the Emperor complained much to me of the King of Naples, who, he said, was no longer a Frenchman and forgot what he owed to his country and his benefactor. On his side, the King complained to Berthier, Duroc and myself that the Emperor had made him merely a viceroy, an instrument to squeeze money out of his subjects, etc., etc.

When receiving the civil authorities, who complained of their excessive burdens, the Emperor tried to soothe them, or rather told them, according to what was repeated at Berlin and Petersburg, that he would take charge of them himself, and incorporate them into the great Empire.¹

The Emperor welcomed the King quite cordially in public, but taking him aside, undoubtedly to forestall his complaints, he began by scolding and being angry with him.² He expostulated with him for his ingratitude, and, at the close of the conversation, he showed both spleen and sentiment—"both necessary in dealing with that Neapolitan pantaloons," he told me. "He has a good heart, and at bottom he likes me better than his lazzaroni. When he sees me he is mine, but away from me, he sides, like all spineless men, with anyone who flatters or makes up to him. If he had come to Dresden his vanity and self-interest would have led him into countless follies in trying to manage the Austrians. His wife is ambitious, and has stuffed his head with foolishness. He wants to have the whole of Italy; that is his dream, and that is what prevents him from wanting the crown of Poland.

¹ He received "the civil authorities; he addressed to them various questions concerning commerce and finance: they deplored their position; 'That will be changed,' he told them, 'I will look after you myself; that is understood; it is only large families that prosper.'" (*Mémoires de Rapp*, p. 165.)

² See Appendix, Vol. II., for the deductions that M. Frédéric Masson draws from Thiers (XIII, 544) and Vandal (III, 463), who had had access to this part of Caulaincourt's memoirs. See also the narrative of Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, I, 87): "The King of Naples . . . had come to Dresden to complain conveniently to Rapp of how he had been kept out of the Dresden meeting." In its general lines this narrative confirms Caulaincourt's version.

I would put Jerome on the throne and make a splendid kingdom for him, but he would have to do something for it, for the Poles love glory. Jerome cares for nothing but pageantry, women, plays and fêtes. My brothers do not back me up. Their only princely quality is their foolish vanity; they lack talent and energy. I have to govern for them. Without me they would ruin the poor Westphalians to enrich their favourites and mistresses, to give fêtes and build palaces. My brothers think of nothing but themselves, yet I set them a good example. I am the King of the people, for I spend nothing except on encouraging the arts and leaving memories that shall be glorious and useful to the nation. It can never be said that I endow favourites and mistresses. I give rewards only for services rendered to the country, and nothing else."

Headquarters and the staff were moved to Thorn, whence everything was sent on to Insterburg, along with the Guard, on the morning after arrival. The Emperor joined headquarters at Insterburg and followed its movement in the direction of Kovno, passing by Gumbinnen, Stalluppöhn, Wilkowschki and a forest road, leaving Marienpol on the right. The troops marching along the road were superb, and received the Emperor with real enthusiasm. The men of the First Corps¹ were noticeable for their fine uniform and general smartness. Coming from excellent quarters, fresh from the hands of a commander who had spent a long time on them, they could rival the Guard. All this mass of youth was full of ardour and good health. The men of this corps carried rations for a fortnight in their haversacks.

The Prince of Eckmühl, who was already on the banks of the Niemen, had built ovens where provisions were cooked as the corps arrived, a detachment of bricklayers having been attached to the advance guard.²

¹ Davout's corps.

² Two months before the opening of the Russian campaign the Emperor instructed the Prince of Neuchâtel to see to the means of furnishing the troops with fifteen days' rations. He commissioned General Dalton to consult with several colonels and prepare him a scheme. No addition was to be made to the weight the soldier already carried; he had to have his proper number of cartridges,

THE PASSAGE OF THE NIEMEN

The Emperor joined the Prince's headquarters, situated a league from the Niemen and from Kovno.¹ Day was breaking, and he immediately made a reconnaissance of the river banks and the neighbourhood. He did not return till evening, when he spent two hours dictating orders; he then mounted his horse once more and made a reconnaissance by moonlight nearer the banks of the river, to determine the place for the crossing. Without exception everyone was left at some distance, so as not to attract the attention of any Russian outposts who might be across the river. The Emperor went up and down the bank, accompanied by General Haxo² of the Engineers. During the morning he had already been obliged to wear the cloak of a Polish soldier, in order to attract less attention.

When the reconnaissance was finished he rejoined his staff officers, and once more examined the different points to be occupied by the troops. As he galloped through the wheat a hare started out between the legs of the Emperor's horse,³ and made him swerve slightly. The Emperor, who had not a good seat, rolled to the ground, but got up so quickly that he was on his feet before I could reach him to give him a hand. He mounted again without saying a word. The ground was very soft and he was only slightly bruised on the hip. The reflection occurred to me at once that this was a

so something had to be taken from him that he could possibly do without. He was left with only a haversack, one shirt, three pairs of shoes, a pair of heavy cloth trousers with black half-gaiters, linen trousers and gaiters. The space thus saved was allotted to a bag with ten pounds of flour to last for five days, bread for four days, biscuit for six days. At first some of the younger soldiers, finding themselves so well provided for, threw away the flour. The officers found this out and Colonel Vasserot when reviewing the 1st Brigade of the Army Corps ordered the empty flour bags to be filled with sand and the delinquents to carry them thus until the time came for them to be refilled with flour. Thus held up to the ridicule of their comrades, every man in the ranks had his right quota of rations by the time the Niemen was crossed. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*) General Alexandre Dalton, who was, later on, seriously wounded at Smolensk, was at that time in command of the First Corps, and Colonel Vasserot (promoted General of Division May 22, 1825, and died December 3, 1840) commanded the 17th Regiment of Infantry of the line.

¹ At two o'clock on the night of 22nd to 23rd, Davout's headquarters were at Gora, but the Prince of Eckmühl rejoined the Emperor near the village of Alexota.

² General Haxo was in command of the Engineers of the Army of Germany.

³ This horse was Friedland.

bad augury, nor was I the only one to think so, for the Prince of Neuchâtel instantly seized my hand and said, "We should do better not to cross the Niemen. This fall is a bad omen."

The Emperor, who at first had kept a complete silence, though his private thoughts were doubtless no more cheerful than our own, presently began to joke with the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself about his fall; but his bad temper and forebodings were obvious despite his efforts at concealment. In other circumstances he would have blamed the charger which had caused this foolish accident, and would not have spared the Master of the Horse. Now, however, he affected the utmost serenity, and did all he could to banish the gloomy doubts which everyone inevitably felt, for people are superstitious despite themselves in such serious moments and on the eve of such great events. Talk about his fall was general; some of the headquarters staff observed that the Romans, who believed in omens, would not have undertaken the crossing of the Niemen.¹ During the whole day the Emperor, usually so cheerful and active when his troops were carrying out extensive operations, was very serious and preoccupied.

There was no news from the other side of the river; communications had been interrupted for some days.

The Prince of Eckmühl, the staff, and everyone, complained that they could obtain no information, and that none of their spies returned. The only sign of life on the opposite bank was an occasional Cossack patrol. During the day the Emperor inspected his troops and continued to reconnoitre the neighbourhood. The corps on our right knew no more than we did of the enemy's movements. They had no news whatever of the Russians. Everyone was complaining that no spies came back, a fact which put the Emperor in bad humour. We only heard from Marienpol that a Jew, coming from the interior, reported that the Russian army was in retreat, and

¹ "As he appeared on this bank his horse suddenly stumbled and threw him to the ground. A voice cried, 'That is a bad omen; a Roman would draw back.' It is not known whether it was he or one of his suite that uttered these words." (Ségur, *Histoire et Mémoires*, IV, 137.)

that we were faced only by Cossacks.¹ The Emperor believed that the Russians were massing on Troki for the defence of Wilna.

The Emperor summoned me after dinner and asked what had caused him to be thrown; he said he was scarcely hurt but had got up so quickly that probably in the darkness no one would have noticed the accident. He asked if it was being talked about at headquarters. He then renewed several inquiries about Russia, the mode of life of the inhabitants, the resources offered by the towns and villages, the state of the roads. He asked if the peasants had any energy, if they were the sort of people to arm themselves and form bands like the Spaniards, and finally if I thought that the army had retreated and thus delivered Wilna to him without giving battle. He seemed to be very anxious that this should be so, but he argued to convince me that the Russians could not have retreated from Marienpol, as had been reported, and thus given up the capital of Lithuania,² and in consequence the whole of Russian Poland, without fighting, if only not to dishonour themselves in the eyes of the Poles. He pressed for my opinion upon this retirement.

I answered that I did not believe in pitched battles, that I thought, as I had always told him, that the terrain was not so limited but that they could yield a great deal, if only to lead him a long distance from his base and oblige him to divide his forces.

"Then I have got Poland," answered the Emperor briskly.

¹ It is interesting to compare the text with the *Itineraire des Archives de Caulaincourt*:

"23rd. Arrived at Naugaraidski at one o'clock in the morning. Mounted Gonzalon. Wore a Polish cloak, black silk cap, with General Haxo, the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Master of the Horse to reconnoitre the Niemen. Followed the water's-edge along the left bank from below Kovno to a league and a half above it. Returned to Naugaraidski at three o'clock. Went into his tent. Mounted Friedland at six in the evening, inspected the pontoon train on the Kowno road, reconnoitred towards Marienpol. Returned at eight o'clock. At nine o'clock mounted the same horse and rode over the heights and the river banks from the point opposite Kovno to where the pontoons had been thrown across. Dismounted at midnight. Ordered artillery to be placed on the hill at the left. Returned to the bridge-head. Had the tents pitched 2000 yards to the rear. Returned at two o'clock in the morning."

² Wilna.

"And in the eyes of the Poles Alexander has the undying shame of having lost it without fighting. To give me Wilna is to lose Poland."

He dwelt at some length on this point, on the deployment of his forces, and their rapid movement, and drew the conclusion that it was impossible for the Russians to save their material and artillery. He even believed that some of it would be destroyed through their inability to escape the rapidity of his movements. He counted and reckoned up the hours it would take him to reach Wilna, and pressed me with questions as if I had done the journey, as if it were only a question of travelling there in a postchaise.

"In less than two months' time," the Emperor said to me, "Russia will be suing for peace. The great landowners will be terrified, some of them ruined. The Tsar Alexander will be in a very awkward position, for at heart the Russians care nothing for the Poles, certainly not enough to face ruin for their sakes."

To avoid being contradicted the Emperor delivered a rapid fire of questions and answers in the sense that he desired, all the time giving the impression of pressing me to answer, and continually asking me, without giving me the chance to get in a word, whether I did not think as he did.

My silence when he had finished speaking vexed him. He wanted an answer conforming to his own ideas. I told him that I could only recall what the Tsar Alexander had said to me, that he rendered full justice to the Emperor's great military talents, and that as far as possible he would avoid pitting himself against him; if he was beaten he would follow the example of the Spaniards, who had often been beaten but had never submitted; lack of perseverance had been the ruin of other States, but he would not fire the first shot, and would sooner retreat to Kamtchatka than surrender provinces or make sacrifices that could never lead to more than a truce.

The Emperor listened to me and dismissed me without replying.

The Niemen was crossed by Morand's division during the

night.¹ The others followed, the bridging material having been taken to the river in advance. This operation was carried out in a few hours without the slightest difficulty, and without any opposition, even from the Cossacks, small numbers of whom were on the farther bank and who only replied to our shots when our troops entered the first village on the other side, some distance from the river.

The Emperor crossed during the morning, as soon as the 1st Division was established, and seemed greatly astonished to learn that the Russian army, which had been at Wilna, had retreated three days previously. Several reports had to be given to him, and various people who had come from over there were taken to him, before he would believe the news. He followed the movements of the advance guard for more than two leagues, pressed forward the whole army, and questioned all the country folk whom he could find, but obtained no positive news; Poles were sent out in all directions to gather information.

The Emperor returned to Kovno,² visited the town and its environs, and was occupied until nightfall in pressing the crossing of the Wilia, which was undertaken by some swimmers, and by erecting a bridge for the passage of an army corps which was to operate on the other side of that river.

It was M. de Guéheneuc who led a couple of hundred determined swimmers across the river.³ He returned from

¹ Night of June 25-24, 1812. The pontoon detachments, under the orders of General Eblé, began to throw their bridges across at ten o'clock on the night of the 25rd. They were ready by midnight and Morand's division (the 1st Division of the 1st Corps) crossed to the right bank.

² He arrived at Kovno at four o'clock in the afternoon, according to the *Itinéraire de l'Empereur Napoléon pendant la campagne de 1812*, by Baron Denniée, p. 18; at eight o'clock according to the *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt*. But the first is speaking of the town, the other of the convent.

³ Colonel Charles Louis Olivier Joseph de Guéheneuc, born at Valenciennes June 7, 1783, died August 26, 1849: brother-in-law of Marshal Lannes, commanded the 13th Regiment of light infantry. This regiment had been ordered to find a ford over the Wilia. The search for this was a prolonged one, and Guéheneuc, tired of waiting, called for volunteers to swim the river and reconnoitre on the opposite bank. Several men came forward and carried out this exploit. Their example encouraged a crowd of French and Polish horsemen to follow suit, but the current was rapid and dangerous and several unfortunate men were carried away. It was then that Colonel Guéheneuc, without removing his uniform, pushed his horse into the river and succeeded in saving one of the men. This incident has been told, amplified and travestied, by Tolstoy in *War and Peace*.

his regiment of light infantry and leaped fully clothed into the river to save a lancer who was being carried away by the current. The Emperor considered that this action, praiseworthy enough in itself, was not appropriate to a colonel at the head of his regiment in the face of the enemy, and told him so.

The Emperor spent the night at the Russian convent a quarter of a league from Kovno. There he stayed until the 26th to work out his plans, press forward the passage of the Niemen, and accelerate the movement of the troops in every direction. He learned that the Russian army was in full retreat, but that as it covered too extended a front, the left, under Bagration, was so far away that it would have difficulty in keeping communication with the centre.

"I will take a hand in it," said the Emperor, "if the Russians will not fight before Wilna."

The Emperor would gladly have given wings to the entire army. On the 27th he slept at Owzianiskai, and on the 28th arrived at Wilna at nine o'clock in the morning.¹ This rapid movement, without stores, exhausted and destroyed all the resources and houses which lay on the way. The advance guard lived quite well, but the rest of the army was dying of hunger. Exhaustion, added to want and the piercingly cold rains at night, caused the death of 10,000² horses. Many of the young Guard died on the road of fatigue, cold and hunger. The chiefs wanted these young men to rival the veterans who had survived so many toils, perils and privations, and the youth of the army was thus the victim of a misplaced zeal.

The Prince of Eckmühl, who supported the advance guard of the King of Naples, had announced that Lieutenant-

¹ Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, I, 174) says midday; Castellane (*Journal*, I, 109) says at two o'clock; Denniée says two o'clock (p. 19); the 4th Bulletin of the Grand Army says at noon.

² "The march from Kovno to Wilna, through forests, across shifting sands, in a terrific heat and continuous, drenching rain, had caused considerable losses in men and horses. Five thousand horses perished in a distance of less than 25 leagues. It is true that this enormous loss must be chiefly attributed to the necessity of foddering the horses on green rye, which the riders had to go and cut at a distance." (Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 21.)

General Balachoff,¹ chief aide-de-camp to the Tsar, had arrived at his headquarters with a letter for the Emperor.² The Prince was ordered to invent some pretext to detain him. It was not until two or three days after his arrival that he was given leave to come to Wilna.³ Our advance guard had had a lively engagement some leagues from the city, and another quite close to it. Our cavalry had not come off best, and M. de Ségur, captain of light cavalry, had been taken prisoner.⁴

The Emperor passed through Wilna without making himself known. The town seemed deserted. A few Jews and inhabitants of the lowest class were the only people to be found in this so-called friendly town which our troops, harassed and rationless as they were, had already treated worse than if it had been an enemy city. The Emperor did not stop on his way through. He inspected the bridge, the ground in front of the city, and magazines which the enemy had set on fire, and which were still burning. He hurried on the repairs to the bridge, gave orders for defensive out-works to be made in front of the town, and then returned thither and went to the palace. Although his return was made public, and the Household, the Headquarters, the

¹ General Alexander Dmitrievitch Balachoff, aide-de-camp to the Emperor of Russia and Minister of Police, born 1770, died 1857.

² Leaving Alexander on the night of the 27th-28th, Balachoff arrived at Davout's headquarters on the morning of the 28th, having met Murat and had a long conversation with him. Cf. A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre*, III, 496, and *Correspondance du Maréchal Davout*, 1885, III, 361.

³ Davout, however, writes to the Major-General on June 29th: "I have received the letter from Your Highness which informs me that it is the Emperor's intention that the Emperor of Russia's aide-de-camp should be taken to Wilna by a different route from that followed by the army. I have the honour to inform you that the necessary orders have been given for this to be done." *Correspondance de Davout*, III, 361.

⁴ Castellane (*Journal*, I, 109) thus relates the affair: "The King of Naples, after repulsing the enemy advance posts at the head of the cavalry, returned to Wilna; five rounds were fired by the guns, two hussars killed and several men wounded. Captain Octave de Ségur, of the 8th Regiment, an officer of conspicuous bravery, was wounded with two lance thrusts and fell into the enemy's hands." Octave Gabriel Henri de Ségur, son of Louis Philippe de Ségur, and brother of Philippe Paul, was born in Paris, June 30, 1779. He entered the army as a sub-lieutenant of chasseurs in 1810. He was the brother-in-law of the Countess de Ségur, née Rostopchin. He died, with the rank of major, August 15, 1818.

Guard and all the paraphernalia that indicated his presence were established there, the population did not exhibit the slightest interest; not a face showed at a single window, not a sign of enthusiasm or even curiosity. Everything was gloomy.

The Emperor was struck by this, and when he entered his study could not help remarking: "The Poles hereabouts are not like those in Warsaw."

This was owing to some disorders that had taken place in the town and caused terror among the inhabitants; it was due also to the fact that the Poles in Wilna were content with the Russian Government and had little inclination for a change. Moreover, the Russians were not far off, and no decisive action had been fought.

The Emperor had definite information of the retreating movement of the enemy. He was amazed at their having yielded Wilna without a struggle, and that they had taken their decision in time to escape him.

It was truly heart-breaking for him to have to give up all hope of a great battle before Wilna, and he voiced his spite by crying out upon the cowardice of his foes who, he said, were playing into his own hands by covering themselves with shame in the eyes of the gallant Poles, whose country and fortunes they were thus surrendering without doing them the honour of fighting for them. He flattered himself that the Prince of Eckmühl would be more fortunate in his movements against Bagration, and that the corps which were to march on the Dwina would get into touch with the left flank of the Russians.¹ His first question to any officer

¹ At the opening of the campaign the Russian forces on the Niemen were composed of three armies. The First Army of the West, commanded by Barclay, had its right wing (Wittgenstein) on the Baltic, its left wing (Doctorov) in the environs of Grodno, its headquarters at Wilna. The Second Army of the West, under Bagration, was extended from Grodno to the Muchaviec, with headquarters at Wolkowsk. The Army of the Reserve, under Tormasov, was extended beyond the Wolhynian marshes, with headquarters at Luck. Opposite these forces the French army was divided into two parts. One part composed of the corps of Davout, Oudinot, Ney, Eugène, Saint-Cyr, the Guard (Mortier) and Murat's cavalry, was under the direct orders of the Emperor. The other, composed of the corps of Poniatowski, Reynier, Vandamme and the cavalry under Latour-Maubourg, was commanded by Jerome. The left wing, under Macdonald,

coming to Headquarters from the various army corps was, "How many prisoners have been taken?" He was anxious for trophies, so as to encourage the Poles, and no one sent him any.

The Duke of Bassano and Prince Sapiéha¹ undertook to organize the country and raise the Poles in arms; but the inhabitants seemed little disposed to respond to the appeals made to their patriotism. The pillage and disorders of all kinds in which the army had indulged had put the whole countryside to flight. In the towns the more respectable people kept within doors. Whatever the zeal of those Poles who had come with the army, the Emperor had to send for any of the responsible persons of Wilna whom he might require, for not a soul presented himself or offered his services.

The Lithuanians were full of praise for the Tsar Alexander, and the utmost difficulty was experienced in organizing the country and inspiring the Lithuanians with any desire or feeling for the re-birth of the Polish fatherland. The disorder which followed in the wake of the army contributed not a little to the general discontent. There was a dearth of everything at Wilna, and by the end of four days it became necessary to seek the barest necessities of life at a great distance. The numbers of deserters from their units had already reached considerable proportions. Military commissions and the making of several examples frightened a number of stragglers into returning to duty, but order was only indifferently established while the army made its crossing.

The Emperor decided to summon M. Balachoff to Wilna.² The way in which His Majesty spoke of M. Balachoff's mission

was at Tilsit with orders to operate against Riga; the right wing, under Schwarzenberg, was on the Bug. After the 26th the First Russian Army beat a retreat from Wilna on to Drissa. The Second Russian Army got into motion on the 29th and retreated from Wolkowysk to Nikolaiav. As soon as they had cleared the Niemen Napoleon sent Oudinot and Ney in pursuit of Barclay, and Davout in the direction of Minsk to separate Bagration from Barclay. (Clausewitz, *La Campagne de 1812 en Russie*.)

¹ Prince Sapiéha-Koswnaki, born September 3, 1773, died at Derescyn September 27, 1812. Napoleon had appointed him a member of the Commission charged with the administration of Lithuania.

² Reaching Wilna on June 30, Balachoff had been lodged in the Prince of Neuchâtel's quarters.

made it seem a veritable trophy presented to the Poles, for he interpreted it as a proof of the Russian Government's embarrassment, and a source of encouragement. I only learned of his arrival from the Prince of Neuchâtel, who told me what he knew of this mission, from which we augured nothing likely to favour peace. The Emperor Napoleon said:

"My brother Alexander, who showed himself so haughty with Narbonne, already wants a settlement. He is afraid. My manœuvres have disconcerted the Russians; before a month is over they will be on their knees to me."

He was too pleased at being in Wilna, and too anxious to flatter himself at the successes which he desired, more perhaps than he already hoped for, to enter into any arrangements. At the same time he was serious and preoccupied, one might even say gloomy. From some remarks that escaped him it was clear that this retreat without battle after the crossing of the Niemen, the losses sustained during the march on Wilna and, above all, the very physiognomy of the landscape, had given rise to thoughts which hardly accorded with the illusions which the Emperor had so long cherished. But he was not a man to shrink from difficulties; they irritated rather than discouraged that great nature. He said aloud (doubtless for the benefit of idle onlookers, to prepare them for the reception he was going to give M. Balachoff, so different from that anticipated after his gibes about the supposed reason for his mission) that he was waging a political war on Russia, and that, having no personal grievance against the Emperor Alexander, he would treat his aide-de-camp well.

M. de Balachoff brought a letter from the Tsar Alexander, and also instructions, in accordance with its contents, to demand the reasons for this invasion in times of absolute peace without the preliminary of any declaration of war. He was also to propose, in the absence of any known grievance based on misunderstanding between the two States, to exchange explanations and to avoid war if the Emperor Napoleon would retire to his positions behind the Niemen pending the issue of negotiations. To a few who were initiated into the

secret of this proposal it was apparent that the rapidity of our movements had from the outset disconcerted and upset the military dispositions of the Russians, and that, embarrassed and doubtful as to his being able to rally Bagration's Corps in front of the Dwina, the Tsar Alexander was trying to delay our advance by any means or negotiations into which he could persuade us to enter. I am repeating what I heard said, for at the time I had no personal knowledge of the matter. I do know, however, that in the presence of the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Duke of Istria, myself and, I think, Duroc, the Emperor Napoleon observed in a loud voice:

"Alexander is laughing at me. Does he imagine that I have come to Wilna to negotiate trade treaties? I have come to finish off, once and for all, the colossus of the barbarians of the North. The sword is drawn. They must be thrust back into their snow and ice so that for a quarter of a century at least they will not be able to interfere with civilized Europe. Even in the days of Catherine," he added, "the Russians counted for little or nothing in the politics of Europe. It was the partition of Poland which gave them contact with civilization. The time has come when Poland, in her turn, must force them back. Do the battles of Austerlitz, of Friedland, or the Peace of Tilsit give ground for the claims of my brother Alexander? We must seize this chance and teach the Russians an unpleasant lesson about their say in what happens in Germany. I consent to their admitting the English to Archangel, but the Baltic should be closed to them. Why did not Alexander explain himself to Narbonne or to Lauriston, who was at Petersburg and whom he would not receive at Wilna.¹ Up to the very last Rumiantsof has refused to believe in the possibility of war. He has persuaded Alexander that our movements were merely threats, that the maintenance of the alliance was too much in my interest for me to be determined on war. He thought that he had fathomed me, that he was more subtle than I am

¹ Lauriston was still at Petersburg when he received a letter dated Dresden, May 20, 1812, instructing him to proceed to the Tsar's headquarters and ask for explanations. On June 19th Napoleon had heard at Gumbinnen that the Tsar had refused to receive this ambassador, and had forbidden him to go to Wilna.

diplomatic. Now that the Tsar sees that it is a serious matter, and that his army has been cut in two, he is afraid and wants to come to terms; but I will sign the Peace at Moscow. I do not intend that the Petersburg cabinet shall think that they have the right to concern themselves with my actions in Germany, nor that their ambassador should dare to threaten me if I do not evacuate Danzig.¹ Everyone has his turn. The time has passed when Catherine split up Poland, and made the feeble Louis XV shake in his shoes at Versailles, or when she had all the gossip of Paris pointing fingers at her. Since Erfurt Alexander has become too haughty. The acquisition of Finland has turned his head. If he must have victories, let him defeat the Persians, but don't let him meddle in the affairs of Europe. Civilization rejects these people of the North; Europe must settle its own affairs without them."

M. de Balachoff was well received by the Emperor,² who invited him to dinner, together with the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Duke of Istria, and myself.³ I was more than astounded at this compliment, but it could not have been paid me on my own account, the Emperor having long since accustomed me not to expect any favours which he could possibly refrain from granting to those in his entourage. The Emperor treated M. de Balachoff perfectly and spoke freely to him.⁴ In the conversation after dinner His Majesty observed, apostrophizing me:

"The Tsar Alexander treats ambassadors accredited to him well. He imagines that he can pursue his policy by means of cajolery. He has turned Caulaincourt into a real Russian."

¹ An allusion to Kurakin's letter of April 30th.

² Balachoff was received for the first time by Napoleon at the Imperial Palace at 10 o'clock on July 1st. He has left a circumstantial account of his mission, published by the *Recueil de l'Académie des Sciences de Saint-Petersbourg*, 1882, parts of which have been incorporated in Tatischeff's *Alexandre I et Napoléon*, p. 590 *et seq.*

³ This dinner was given at 7 o'clock on July 1st. Duroc was also a guest. (Balachoff's report.)

⁴ It was during this dinner that Balachoff, when Napoleon asked him which was the road to Moscow, made the famous reply: "The Russians say, like the French, that all roads lead to Rome. The road to Moscow is a matter of choice; Charles XII went thither by Pultowa."

It was the customary reproach. As he could not harm me in the eyes of my countrymen, who knew me well enough to appreciate the value of this kind of reproach as well as I did, I paid no heed to it. But when it was repeated with the obvious intention of commending me to the good graces of the Emperor Alexander, the words grated on me, and I could not refrain from answering the Emperor with some warmth:

"It is doubtless because my freedom of speech has too successfully proved to Your Majesty that I am a very good Frenchman that you can pretend to doubt it. The marks of kindness with which the Tsar Alexander so often honoured me were in reality addressed to Your Majesty. As your faithful servant, Sire, I shall never forget them."

The Emperor, observing my irritation, changed the subject, and shortly afterwards dismissed M. de Balachoff.

Before dinner the Emperor had instructed me to see this general and inform him that he would be given horses to enable him to rejoin the Russian army, and had likewise ordered me to arrange with him as to his route and the escort he would require. I only saw him for a moment, when I prayed him to lay the homage of my respect at the feet of his sovereign.

M. de Balachoff having left the Emperor's presence, His Majesty said to me, jokingly, that I was wrong to be incensed at his remarks about my having turned Russian; it was only a trick on his part to prove to the Tsar that I had not forgotten his tokens of goodwill.

"You torment yourself," added the Emperor, "by considering the harm I shall do your friend. His armies dare not await us; they will no more save the honour of his arms than they will that of his cabinet. Before two months are out the Russian nobility will force Alexander to sue for peace."

To his usual grievances he added many other matters to prove to the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Duke of Istria, Duroc, and (I think) one or two of his aides-de-camp who were present, that I opposed this war and condemned his system.

Several times he repeated that this war was the most politic war he had ever undertaken, that Russia had done nothing for the alliance since Tilsit, that she had given little or no help in the Austrian campaign. He complained of her protecting English trade. He tried to prove that Austria viewed the war with favour, because she hoped that her maritime provinces would be given back to her rather than to Poland, in whom she had no interest whatever.¹

So outraged was I at the reproach, "You are a Russian," that I could not contain myself. I answered the Emperor that I was a better Frenchman than those who extolled this war; that I had always told him the truth when others, in hopes of pleasing him, merely told him tales to excite his feelings. I added that, knowing the respect I owed to my sovereign, I took his pleasantries in good part when only my countrymen were present, for I already possessed their esteem; but it was an outrage to doubt my fidelity and patriotism before a foreigner. Since the Emperor had published the fact, I said, I was proud to be against this war, to have done all I could to prevent it, and I even felt honoured at the disagreeableness and vexations which my attitude had brought me. I concluded by saying that, having for a long time seen that my services were no longer acceptable to him, I begged permission to retire; but as I could not honourably go into private life while the war lasted, I begged him to give me a command in Spain and permission to start on the morrow.

The Emperor answered me very quietly.

"Who is doubting your fidelity? I know well enough that you are a man of worth. I was only joking. You are too touchy; you know perfectly well that I hold you in esteem. You are at present talking foolishly, and I shall not reply to what you are saying," etc., etc.

I was, I confess, so beside myself that, far from growing calmer, I was on the verge of saying the most unbecoming things to the Emperor.

The Duke of Istria pulled one tail of my coat, the Prince

¹ See *Ségur's account of this scene, Histoire et Mémoires, IV, 170.*

of Neuchâtel the other, and between them they drew me aside and begged me to retort no more. The Emperor, who kept his patience, and spoke, I am bound to admit, with the same kindness, seeing that I was beyond listening to reason, retired to his study and left me to those gentlemen who tried vainly to lead me away and calm me. I had lost my head completely. At last I reached my quarters, firmly resolved to take my departure, and I did not retire to bed until I had put all my affairs in order and left everything arranged for my departure.

Very early the next morning¹ I asked Duroc to take over my duties and receive the Emperor's orders. In vain did he remonstrate with me. A little later the Prince of Neuchâtel and Duroc came in succession from the Emperor, who, not seeing me in the bedchamber at his rising, charged them to tell me that he did not want to hear any more about my going. But I persisted in my desire to be gone. Not seeing me when he mounted his horse, the Emperor sent for me twice, but I was not to be found. I wished to avoid the embarrassment of answering people to whom it was unfitting that I should enter into explanations of my refusal to attend His Majesty.

Seeing that I did not appear, the Emperor, having taken some turns about the town and stopping by the bridge, gave orders that I should be sought and found and told that his orders were that I should go and speak to him. I could not refuse obedience, and I joined him whilst he was inspecting the outworks in front of Wilna.

As soon as I presented myself he pinched my ear (this was his habitual sign of friendliness).

"Are you mad, wanting to leave me?" he said. "I esteem you, as you know, and had no wish to hurt your feelings."

Whereupon he galloped off, pulled up soon afterwards, and began to speak of many other matters. Neither Duroc nor I could come to any other decision or say anything else, except that it was impossible to leave him.

M. de Bassano, and others charged with organizing the

¹ July 1812.

country, vaunted their pretended enthusiasm. I lived, as usual, in the closest retirement. My discussion with the Emperor had made me even more circumspect. I am obliged to say, however, that he disclosed nothing further in this connection. Everyone brought me word of what was going on; besides, it was only necessary to have a pair of ears when one was in the ante-rooms, or during the Emperor's excursions, to learn whatever there was to know. Everyone saw what the Lithuanians were like: very cold towards the Polish cause, by no means ready to make any sacrifices, very discontented at the inconveniences of a military occupation and the disorders inseparable from such rapid movements. Probably they would have been pleased to see the restoration of Poland, but they had doubts whether this was the Emperor's sole aim, and above all, that it would result in a form of government agreeable to their claims and pretensions, their interests, and their habits. Nevertheless a commission of government was organized.

The Diet of Warsaw, which met on June 24th¹ as a general Confederation, called the Poles to arms and summoned them to desert the standards of the oppressors whom they were serving. It sent a deputation to Wilna to lay its wishes and desires before the Emperor, and also to stimulate the Lithuanians. The Emperor's reply to their address treated Galicia as no part of Poland, and was so evasive that it chilled and dissatisfied the most zealous.²

It is easy to judge of its effect on those who were not at all zealous. In the Emperor's reply everybody sought to find what he desired to find in it. Wiseacres perceived an indication of indecision and, consequently, a proof that the Emperor had not yet made up his mind about Poland, and that in certain circumstances, which might be brought about by military events, this restoration, being no *sine qua non*, would not be an obstacle to peace. It was also sought to prove from this reply that the Emperor perceived that the

¹ Presided over by Prince Adam Czartoriski, Grand Marshal. See *Histoire de l'ambassade dans le grand-duché de Pologne en 1812*, by M. de Pradt, Paris, 1816, p. 120.

² This deputation was received by the Emperor on July 11, 1812.

RETREAT OF THE RUSSIAN ARMY

Lithuanians were far from enthusiastic, and considered that the way in which the Russians had started the campaign was likely to keep the question open longer than he had hoped; so he did not wish to tie his hands. These ideas made the well-informed, and many others as well, smile, for those who disapproved of this unfortunate campaign were many, even at its outset.

The Emperor showed incredible activity during his stay at Wilna. Twenty-four hours did not give him a long enough day. Aides-de-camp, orderly officers, staff officers, were constantly on the roads. He waited with insatiable impatience for reports from the corps on the march. His first words to all who arrived were invariably, "How many prisoners have been taken?"

To his great regret none of the skirmishes led to any result. He flattered himself, with reason, that the Prince of Eckmühl would come to grips with Prince Bagration, and rejoiced at seeing old Suvaroff's right hand at grips with the most tenacious of his own lieutenants. He was extremely annoyed at the ill-fought skirmish of the King of Naples's advance guard with the enemy cavalry,¹ in which General de Saint-Geniès and a considerable number of men were captured.² All this time our left was gaining ground. The Emperor's plans were taking shape, and on July 17th³ he left Wilna to join his Guard at Swenziany.

There the Emperor received despatches from the King of Naples giving details of the check to his cavalry. At the same time the King announced the evacuation by the Russians of the entrenched camp at Drissa on July 18th,⁴ and the general retreat of the Russian army, which had abandoned all its positions and the works upon which it had been labouring for two years. This was inevitable, for Bagration

¹ On July 15th the outposts of one of our brigades had been surprised and captured by one of Wittgenstein's corps.

² Jean Marie Nöel de l'Isle de Falcon de Saint-Geniès, born at Montauban, December 25, 1773, had been general of brigade since August 6, 1811. He was promoted lieutenant-general on December 31, 1835, and died at Vernon (Indre-et-Loire), March 28, 1839.

³ More exactly, at 11 o'clock on the night of July 16th.

⁴ It was on July 16th that Barclay evacuated the Drissa camp, falling back along the Moscow road on Witepsk. (Clausewitz, p. 43.)

would have been cut off from Barclay and the southern provinces¹ if he had not hastened to take this step. The Emperor had long predicted it, and it augured well; the news went to his head, and at the same time kindled the enthusiasm of those who were most cold towards the Polish Cause, as it was called at headquarters.

His Majesty at once decided to go to Gloubokoje, and the Guard was immediately despatched towards that place. The Emperor spent twelve hours at Swenziany to dictate orders, and marched the whole of that night in the hope that, by the rapidity of this movement, he would make contact with the Russian army. In the morning he arrived at Gloubokoje,² a fine monastery in a very fertile stretch of country. This astounding march from Wilna to Gloubokoje proved that horses well ridden can cover a surprising distance, for the mounted chargers and the animals laden with heavy packs left Wilna at six o'clock in the morning, reached Swenziany at eight o'clock in the evening, and by noon of the following day were at Gloubokoje, having thus covered forty-eight leagues. The saddle-horses made the journey of six (?) leagues from Swenziany to Gloubokoje in eighteen hours without one falling sick.

The King of Naples, who commanded the advance guard, was on the Dwina. Various cavalry skirmishes with mixed success had followed that ill-performed reconnaissance which had cost us General de Saint-Geniès and many officers. The Russian army, having concealed its line of retreat, was able to effect it without being harassed, but Marshal Prince of Eckmühl, by his rapid march on Mohilew,³ had cut off the retreat of Prince Bagration who engaged in a lively battle with the advance guard at Salta-Nowka in a vain attempt to reopen his communications.⁴

¹ Leaving Niewicz on July 13th, Bagration crossed the Beresina at Bobruisk and reached the Dnieper at Staroi Bychov on the 21st. (Clausewitz, p. 43.)

² According to Castellane (*Journal*, I, 117) the Emperor reached the convent of Gloubokoje at two o'clock in the afternoon of the 18th.

³ On leaving Minsk on July 14th Davout marched at first to Borisow. On the 20th he reached Mohilew and stayed there until July 29th.

⁴ This battle was fought on July 23rd. See the account in Davout's report, dated from Dobrowna, August 7, 1812. (*Correspondance de Davout*, III, 375.)

Having failed in doing this, after futile efforts in which he lost from four to five thousand men, he decided to attempt a new detour to get into touch with the main army, but was not able to rejoin it until they reached Smolensk.¹ This, affair was very costly in men, principally to the Russians, but very few prisoners were taken.²

It was ascertained at the same time that the Tsar Alexander had left Polotsk on July 18th, and his army some days previously; also that he had gone on to Moscow to call the nation to arms.³ It was thought that he had left the army in order to escape the responsibility of subsequent military happenings, since its earlier movements had been unfortunate in that the forces had been separated and obliged to evacuate the great entrenched camp at Drissa, which was looked upon in Russia as an invincible barrier if held by sufficient troops. Everything seemed to indicate that the corps were far from being up to strength, as was supposed, and as they might easily have been if, as the Emperor said, the Russian chiefs and commissariat had not put a quarter of the army into their own pockets.⁴ It was also learned that a ukase had been issued for calling to the colours one man in every hundred, as well as two proclamations by the Tsar Alexander, one to the Russian nation and the other to the people of the city of Moscow, which could leave no manner of doubt as to the desire to make the war a national one. Printed notices, signed by Barclay and tossed to our outposts, proved that he was not even scrupulous as to the means he would employ,

¹ Bagration passed the Dnieper on July 24th and retired on Mstislavi, then on Smolensk, where he arrived on August 4th, some days later than Barclay.

² The enemy "left on the field upwards of 1200 dead and more than 4000 wounded, of which seven or eight hundred are in our hands, as well as one hundred and fifty to two hundred prisoners. (Davout to Berthier, August 7, 1812. *Correspondance de Davout*, III, 578.)

³ Alexander I, who held no actual command himself, left for Moscow on July 14th at the instance of his generals, who were apprehensive of his incapacity. (Cf. K. Waliszewski, *Le Règne d'Alexandre I*, II, 59.)

⁴ "It was said—even at the very moment when the Russian army on the frontier numbered no more than 180,000—that the Emperor Alexander had on his payroll no less than 600,000 men. This statement, which Clausewitz considered at the time as a piece of ironical exaggeration although it had been told him by a high official, was really the actual truth." (Clausewitz, *La Campagne de 1812*, 9. Cf. Stein, *Geschichte des Russischen Heeres*, 223.)

for the French and Germans were asked to desert their standards and settle in Russia.¹

The Emperor appeared amazed at this.

"My brother Alexander stops at nothing," he said. "If I liked, I too could promise his peasants freedom.² He has been deceived as to the strength of his army; he does not know how to employ it; and he does not want to make peace; he is not consistent. A man who is not the strongest should be the most politic, and his policy should be to make an end."

The Emperor was at the peak of delight when he learned of the evacuation of the camp at Drissa, which the Russians had taken two years to fortify. Alexander's departure thence seemed to him a great success. He rightly attributed it to his own rapid movements, which had prevented the joining up of the various corps of the whole army, and had obliged it to evacuate the camp without a battle in order to seek a rallying point further away. Now, he said, he could choose between Moscow and Petersburg, if Russia did not sue for peace. By rapid manœuvres he hoped to force the Russian army to give battle as he desired, or else to demoralize and undermine them by continual retreat without fighting. He added that Bagration's corps would not join the main army, that it would be captured, or anyhow be partially destroyed, and that this would cause a great sensation in Russia, as that general was one of Suvaroff's old comrades in arms. The

¹ The text of this address from the Russians to the French soldiers is to be found in the *Journal de l'Empire*, issue of August 6, 1812, and in Chuquet, *La Guerre de Russie*, 1912-35. It said explicitly, "go home, or if you wish while waiting to do so to find a refuge in Russia, you will there forget all about conscription, about the 'levée de ban' and 'arrière ban,' and all that military tyranny which does not permit you for one moment to elude its yoke." Napoleon's answer was to print the "reply of a French grenadier," which Chuquet also published, as well as the appeal to the Germans, and "the reply of a German."

² In his reply to the address of the Senate of December 20, 1812, Napoleon returned to this idea: "I should have been able to arm the greater part of his population against him had I proclaimed the freedom of the Serfs. A great number of villages asked me for it. But when I got to know the brutishness of that very numerous class of the Russian people I refused to grant a measure which would have been the sentence of death to many families and would have involved them in utter ruin and consigned them to the most horrible torture." (*Correspondance*, 19589.)

Emperor had quickly decided on his movement against Witepsk in the hope of forcing the Russian army to fight in defence of that town and await Bagration, whom the Prince of Eckmühl continued to press so closely. His Majesty left Gloubokoje on the 21st, and slept at Kamen on the 23rd. The hussars of the Russian Guard suffered severely in an affair with our advance guard near Beschenkowitschi.¹ It was on reaching that small town on the 24th that the Emperor noticed what we had already observed for two days past, that all the inhabitants had fled, leaving their houses absolutely deserted, and that everything went to prove that this migration was in accordance with a definite system carried out under orders recently given by the government.

From Beschenkowitschi to beyond Witepsk we were always in bivouac or under canvas.

The Emperor was so anxious for a battle that he pressed forward the movements of the army with all his energy and all the brilliance of his genius. The battle of Ostrowno,² after Beschenkowitschi, was quite costly, and sufficiently advantageous, but it was nevertheless only a rear-guard action in which the enemy really obtained the result he desired, in that he hindered our movement, forced us to make fresh dispositions, and in consequence delayed us for several hours.

The Russians were pushed as far as the Lutchiesa, a stream that flows into the Dwina a short distance from Witepsk. During the night all the corps and artillery reserves were hurried forward, and everything was got ready in the hope that on the morrow, or at latest the following day, the great battle would be fought which had so long been the goal of all the Emperor's wishes and hopes. His Majesty remained in the saddle during part of the night, pressing forward the march, urging and encouraging the troops, who were all full of ardour. The King of Naples assured us that all the enemy movements indicated dispositions for a battle. The Emperor and the whole army were so anxious for this

¹ Actually this battle was fought on July 25th. Murat found himself opposed by Tolstoi-Ostermann's corps, charged with covering Barclay's right on the march from Witepsk on Orcha.

² July 26th. Eugène and Murat against Konownitzin.

that they could not but flatter themselves that this great objective was about to be attained.

The Emperor was on horseback before daybreak (on the 27th), and the reconnaissances pushed as far as Lutchesia found a strong body of enemy cavalry in position. Our infantry arrived. Two regiments had already crossed the bridge but were waiting on a plateau, a little in advance and to the right, until the artillery and the remainder of the cavalry should join them. The enemy deployed considerable masses of cavalry, which bore down on the weak regiments of light troops that composed our advance-guard, who were formed in two lines, to the left of the road and in front of the gully. Our cavalry regiments reached them, but could not form up quickly enough to make headway against the masses of men already engaged with our advance guard, over which the enemy gained at the outset an easy success.

During this time a company of light infantry, detached from our left to support the small strength of our cavalry, proved what the resolution of this admirable branch of infantry can do, even when it is cut off.¹ Placed along the stream and in some bushes and houses in front of the gully, these brave fellows were surrounded by a cloud of cavalry against which they kept up a constant fire in support of our feeble squadrons. They kept up a continuous fire, and emptied many saddles among the enemy, doing such damage that by degrees they forced him off the flank of our squadrons, who would have been seriously threatened from the onset of the attack had it not been for this valuable help. Several times we saw five or six of these light infantrymen stand together some fifty paces from the enemy squadrons, and when the cavalry swept on to them, stand back-to-back, holding their fire waiting for them at point-blank range. They even

¹ This refers to a company of the 9th of the Line, commanded by Captains Guyard and Savary (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, I, 283; and Labaume, *Rélation Circostanciée de la Campagne de Russie*, Paris, 1815, 71). This feat of arms was performed on July 27th. The 10th bulletin dated from Witepsk, July 31, 1812, having narrated the events, adds: "struck by their fine bearing, he (Napoleon) sent to ask what corps it was. They answered 'the 9th, and three-quarters of them lads of Paris!'"—"Tell them," said the Emperor, "that they are fine lads; every man of them deserves the Cross."

took some prisoners. This company played a great part in the events of the day. The Emperor said to several of them, who brought him prisoners and asked for the Cross: "You are all brave lads, and you all deserve it." Indeed, guerilla warfare had never been fought with more intelligence or boldness. These brave fellows were the object of the whole army's admiration; some were slain, many wounded, but even these, unless totally disabled, were unwilling to leave their comrades. I cannot describe how deeply I regret having lost, among other notes relative to the retreat, the names of the officers and non-commissioned officers, and even the number, of this gallant regiment.

After this action, which delayed our movements even further, the army again began to advance, and on the morrow we found ourselves in presence of the enemy, who was occupying the heights crowning a great plateau in front of Witepsk. We were separated only by the Lutchiesia and our outposts at the foot of the plateau. The day was spent in manœuvring, bombarding, and minor attacks to test and adjust our respective positions in preparation for the great battle for which the Emperor and the majority of the French were hoping on the morrow. The Emperor was cheerful and already beaming with pride, so confident was he of measuring his strength with the enemy and obtaining a result that should give some colour to his already too-distant expedition. He spent the day in the saddle, reconnoitred the terrain in every direction, even at a considerable distance, and returned to his tent very late,¹ having actually seen and checked everything for himself.

It is impossible to give any idea of the general disappointment—especially the Emperor's disappointment—when, at daybreak² the certainty was borne in upon us that the Russian army had vanished and abandoned Witepsk. Not a soul was to be found, not even a peasant, who could indicate

¹ He installed himself near a burnt mill, not far from Lutchiesia. (Schnerman's *Itinéraire Général de Napoléon*, 305.)

² July 28th. At first Barclay decided to give battle, but he retreated during the night of the 27–28th, after receiving a courier from Bagration informing him that that general was making for Smolensk.

the direction taken by the enemy, for they had not passed through the town.

For some hours we had to act like huntsmen and follow up in every direction the track they had taken. What was the use? What route had his masses of men and artillery followed? No one knew, and for some hours no one could know, for there were signs of them in every direction. Moreover, the Emperor at first only sent out his advance-guards. He examined closely, and more than once, every locality of the enemy's positions, especially those where he had bivouacked and camped, so that he might estimate their exact strength. He obtained all the information he could in front of Witepsk, and then entered the town at eleven o'clock to see if he could discover details as to the strength, movements and plans of the Russians; but he was unable to obtain any satisfactory enlightenment. He passed rapidly through the streets and outside the town, and then rejoined his Guard, which, like the rest of the troops, was already on the march along the road to Smolensk. He flattered himself that the enemy's rear-guard would be caught up, and in consequence he hastened forward the movement of all troops in the van, at the same time asking the King of Naples to secure some prisoners at all costs and send them to him. But through negligence our advance-guard¹ fell into an ambush near Lochesna; we lost some men, and positions were seized on both sides. The troops were harassed. Many of the horses of the advance guard had been unable to stay the charge, and so involved the loss of their riders. The Emperor bivouacked at Lochesna² with the Guard, and remained there through part of the following day³ waiting for news.

But there were no inhabitants to be found, no prisoners to be taken, not a single straggler to be picked up. There were no spies. We were in the heart of inhabited Russia and yet, if I may be permitted the comparison, we were like a vessel without a compass in the midst of a vast ocean, knowing

¹ Fourth Corps (Eugène).

² A farm near the village of Agaponowszczyzna, seven leagues from Witepsk, on the Smolensk road. The Emperor slept under canvas.

³ July 29th.

nothing of what was happening around us. At last it was learned from two peasants¹ who were caught that the Russian army was far ahead of us, and that it had been on the move for four days.

For more than an hour the Emperor remained undecided.

"Perhaps the Russians want to give battle at Smolensk," he said. "Bagration has not yet joined up with them; we must attack them."

At last he decided to give the army a much-needed rest. Part of the cavalry was already worn out, the artillery and infantry were exhausted, the roads were covered with stragglers who destroyed and wasted everything. It was indispensable to organize our rear and await the result of the operations undertaken by the corps that had remained on the Dwina. The certainty that the Russian army was going to escape him, and that he would not, for some time, obtain the battle he desired so keenly, cast the Emperor into deep gloom. Eventually he resigned himself to the necessity of returning to Witepsk.

As I have said, our cavalry and artillery had already suffered severely. A very large number of horses had died. Many were lagging behind, wasting away, wandering at the rear; others followed their corps, to whom they were but a useless embarrassment. A considerable number of ammunition wagons and other vehicles had been abandoned one after the other. One-third of the horses were missing; not more than half of those we had had at the beginning of the campaign were still in service.

It was at Lochesna, on the evening of that skirmish with the Cossacks, that I heard the Emperor make his first reflections on the new method of warfare adopted by the Russians. Above all he was vexed that no prisoners had been taken in our engagements with the enemy, as this deprived him of any positive information as to their movements. With the exception of the Jesuits, all the better-class inhabitants of the town had fled, and their houses were deserted.

¹ One of them had been found asleep beneath a bush by Colonel Klicki. (Labaume, *Rélation*, 77.)

The few people who had stayed in Witepsk belonged to the lowest classes and had seen nothing, heard nothing. That evening the corps commanders were summoned to the Emperor's tent, and to some extent reprimanded for not having taken measures to capture prisoners in the minor affrays of the advance-guard. They asserted, as we already knew and as we and the Prince of Neuchâtel had told the incredulous Emperor, that the cavalry chargers were so worn out that they could no longer go at the gallop, so that the men were forced to dismount and save themselves on foot if their squadrons were forced back in a charge.

The King of Naples was better able to appreciate these troubles than anyone, and he told us all about them when he chatted with us. He even ventured to make some remarks to this effect to the Emperor, but His Majesty did not care for reflections that ran counter to his projects, and lent a deaf ear. He changed the subject, and the King of Naples, who above all wished to please him, and by so doing flatter his own vanity, kept to himself the wise reflections which he had voiced to us alone, and soon forgot everything. Always at the forefront of the skirmishers, and eager to thrust his plumes and bizarre uniform beneath the very noses of the Cossacks, he brought about the ruin of the cavalry and ended by causing the loss of the army, and brought France and the Emperor to the brink of an abyss.

One day, however, General Belliard, chief of staff to the King of Naples, observed in his presence to the Emperor, who was questioning him:

"Your Majesty must be told the truth. The cavalry is rapidly disappearing; the marches are too long and exhausting, and when a charge is ordered you can see the brave fellows are forced to stay behind because their horses cannot be put to the gallop."

The Emperor paid no attention to these prudent observations. He wanted to reach his prey, and in his view it was evidently worth paying any price to obtain this object, for to that end he sacrificed everything.

While these events befell with the Grand Army, the King

of Westphalia, detached for the support of the Prince of Eckmühl's Corps, let his troops pillage the Duchy of Warsaw, of which he flattered himself he was the governor, and drove that loyal country into discontent. Like a good many other people he imagined that the Poland which the Emperor wished to revive, this buffer State which he wished to create, had already come into being. The King of Westphalia, as I say, thought it beneath his dignity to serve under the victor of Auerstadt and Eckmühl, so he left the Grand Army and returned to Cassel¹ with his guard. Such was the support given to the Emperor in sore straits by the brothers whom he had made kings. According to the Emperor, the King was the cause of the Prince of Eckmühl's failure to carry out his operations successfully, for he enabled Bagration to escape, and thus brought about the initial failure of the campaign. I am repeating what I heard the Emperor say on several occasions, and what the Prince of Neuchâtel told me, later to be confirmed by the Prince of Eckmühl.

The Emperor had left the Prince of Eckmühl only a portion of his Corps; the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Divisions, commanded by Generals Morand, Gudin and Friant, had been placed under the orders of the King of Naples after the crossing of the Niemen, for the purpose of following up the enemy and supporting our cavalry. The Prince was left with only the Compans and Desaix Divisions, and half of the latter had been left by him for observation at Minsk.² As soon as

¹ On July 6th the Emperor ordered that in the event of the 5th, 7th, and 8th Army Corps and the 4th Reserve Corps of Cavalry being put with Davout's Corps, the command of the whole would devolve on the latter (*Correspondance*, 18911). Davout communicated this order to Jerome on the 14th, announcing that he would assume command of the united corps. That same evening the King of Westphalia wrote to his brother that he "had resolved not to serve under anyone but him." On the 16th he left his headquarters at Newij with his body-guard, sleeping at Turzec. From there he went in the direction of Cassel, where he arrived on August 16th. (*Mémoires et Correspondance du roi Jérôme*, V., 414.)

² The Marshal took up his position at Salta-Nowka. His troops, though far outnumbered, covered themselves with glory, notably the 61st Regiment. During this period the first three divisions of the 1st Corps reached the Dwina. That night the first division took the transport of Doctorov's Division between Mikaclesi and Swir, and would have done much more damage had not an order from the Emperor, which was recalled thirty-six hours later, caused them to lose three marches. (*Note by Caulaincourt*.) The battle of Salta-Nowka was fought on July 23rd.

the Emperor understood the Russian movements, and saw that Bagration's Corps had been separated from the main army, he threw the Prince against Bagration's Army Corps with the few troops he had at his disposal (a division and a half),¹ but at the same time informed him that he was putting the King of Westphalia and his Corps at his disposal, as well as Poniatowski's Poles who were following it. The Prince, realizing the importance of the operation the Emperor had entrusted to him, pressed forward, knowing that Bagration had long and difficult defiles to traverse between extensive marshes, and resolved to forestall him at the end of these defiles, even if only with the head of his column. He accordingly informed the King of his intended movement, told him what he knew and what he planned, at the same time requesting him to inform Poniatowski and to press Bagration, who had lost three days at Neswiji and time in counter-marching, and could thus be drawn between two fires. But the King was disgruntled at finding himself under the orders of the Prince of Eckmühl; and without regard to the circumstances, or to the character of a man who had won such battles and to whom he even owed his crown, lost his temper and neglected to obey these orders, heedless of the consequences which his disobedience would bring on his brother and the Prince. He did not even pass on the orders to Poniatowski, who might have carried them out, at least in part. Not only did the King give a cold reception to the officer who handed him the orders, but he even permitted himself to pass unsuitable comments upon them, and as I have said, took himself off with his Guard. As he had planned, the Prince fell on the convoys and parks that preceded Bagration's march, captured a considerable part of them, took some prisoners, and continued his movement without encumbering himself with his captures, so as to be in position before the Russians could debouch.

Not being in sufficient force, after the King's departure,

¹ Besides the 57th, 61st and 111th Regiments of the Compans Division, and the 85th and 108th of the Desaix Division, Davout had the Valence Division and the 3rd Chasseurs. (*Correspondance de Davout*, III, 376.)

to give battle in open country, the Prince proceeded to take up his position before Mohilew,¹ towards which town Bagration was heading; for the King of Westphalia's disobedience had saved him by facilitating his change of route. Knowing that he had only to deal with the weak corps hurriedly mustered by the Prince, and that no one was pressing him, Bagration had the insolence to send an aide-de-camp to the Prince of Eckmühl to say that for some days he had been deceived by the Prince's activity, but that now he knew there was only the head of column to oppose him, and to avoid a useless engagement he informed him that he intended to sleep the following night in Mohilew. Instead of replying to this boastful impertinence, the Prince strengthened his position as best he could. At the outset of the engagement success was evenly divided; but, attacked with vigour, the Prince put up a brave defence; and eventually put four or five thousand of Bagration's men out of action, and forced him to retire and change his direction during the night.²

When it is considered what an effect on subsequent events this destruction of Bagration's corps might have had, and the result that might have been obtained at the outset of the campaign by this first manœuvre of the Emperor and the masterly strategy of the Prince, it is impossible not to feel pity at the sight of that great captain betrayed by his own relations, before being betrayed in the end by fortune.

On his return to Witepsk³ the Emperor's first care was for provisions and hospitals. I was given the duty of visiting them, distributing money to the wounded, consoling them and encouraging them.

I fulfilled this sad mission to the best of my ability, nor was it without its dangers, for infection was rife. The unfortunate men were in the direst want, lying on the ground, for the most part without even straw beneath them, and all in the most unfavourable conditions. A great number of them, even officers, had not had their wounds dressed, churches and warehouses were all full; and at first sick men

¹ July 20th, 1812.

² July 23rd. Salta-Nowka.

³ Caulaincourt's narrative returns to July 29th.

and wounded were mixed together. The surgeons and doctors, far too few in number, were unable to cope with the needs of the service; besides, they were without requisites; there was neither linen nor medicine. With the exception of the Guard, who had preserved some supplies, the ambulances lacked even the cases of instruments, which had been left at the rear and lost in the wagons abandoned by the roadside when their horses died. It had been hoped to obtain some supplies at Witepsk, but the place was practically deserted. Moreover, the capital cities of these great Russian provinces were of less use than the smallest towns in Germany. Too much accustomed to relying upon the resources of the country, we had reckoned on being able to do the same in Russia. The disappointment was great, and very bitter for these poor wretches, who were forced to suffer without any means being found to relieve them. It is impossible to give any idea of the utter want experienced at first. The lack of order, the indiscipline of the troops and even of the Guard, robbed us of the few means that remained at our disposal. Never was there a situation more deplorable, or a spectacle more heart-rending for those who could think, and who had not been dazzled by the false glamour of glory and ambition. With the exception of the chiefs, the indifference of the administrations was complete. The innumerable wagons, the enormous quantity of supplies of all sorts that had been collected at such expense during the course of two years, had vanished through theft and loss, or through lack of means to bring them up. They were scattered along the roads. The rapidity of the forced marches, the shortage of harness and spare parts, the dearth of provisions, the want of care, had all helped to kill the horses. This campaign at express speed from the Niemen to Wilna, and from Wilna to Witepsk, had, without any real result, already cost the army two lost battles and deprived it of absolutely essential provisions and supplies.

To ensure that no indiscreet word should be uttered the Emperor consulted no one. Consequently our wagons and all our transport, built for metalled roads and to accomplish ordinary distances, were in no way suitable for the roads of the

DISORDER

country we had to traverse. The first sand we came across overwhelmed the horses, for instead of the loads being diminished in proportion to the weight of the vehicle and the distance to be covered, they had been increased, in the notion that the daily consumption would sufficiently lessen them. But in working out this scheme of daily consumption the Emperor had not taken into account the distance that would have to be covered before the point was reached when this consumption would begin.

To all these causes of failure must be added the weighty nature of our impedimenta, the shortage of provisions, the forced marches, the total lack of care or supervision, and all the inseparable consequences of traversing a route already ransacked and destitute of resources, where the men, lacking everything to supply their own needs, were little inclined to pay any heed to their horses, and watched them perish without regrets, for their death meant the breakdown of the service on which they were employed, and thus the end to their personal privations. There you have the secret and cause of our earlier disasters and of our final reverse.

Disorder reigned everywhere; in the town as in the country around, everyone was in want. The Guard was in no better plight than the other corps, and thence arose indiscipline and all its attendant evils. The Emperor was angry, and took the corps commanders and administrators to task with something more than severity; but this did no good, in face of the continued failure to bring up rations.

The Emperor hoped to remedy the disorganization of the corps by establishing more direct contact with them. In accordance with plans he had discussed with me since Dresden and Thorn, he created two staff posts to be held by generals, one for the infantry and one for the cavalry, appointing Counts Lobau and Durosnel,¹ who were duly gazetted.² The

¹ They "were charged to watch the situation of those two arms, their appearance, their effectiveness, their needs. They were to assure themselves of the actual strength of the regiments at the time of every battle" (Thiers, XIV, 167). It was the first time that Napoleon agreed to an organization of this nature. Antoine Jean Auguste Henry Durosnel, born on April 16, 1809, had been aide-de-camp to the Emperor since June 30, 1810, after serving as equerry, and he died in Paris, February 5, 1849.

² Decree of August 12, 1812.

various corps had to report to them, every detached division or brigade had to have an officer attached to them, and had to send reports direct to their headquarters. He also expected to re-establish order at general headquarters by placing it under an officer who would be capable of coping with the leaders of the Guard. My brother,¹ who had been on the sick list for six months and compelled to leave Spain, had the dangerous honour of being appointed to this post.² The Emperor had made him Master of the Pages, so that he could have a rest, and like his predecessors in this post he had acted as the Emperor's aide-de-camp; so His Majesty was acquainted with his strength of character and his love of order. This induced him to entrust to my brother the execution of these onerous duties, despite his repugnance towards the post. He was especially commissioned to re-establish discipline, to supervise hospitals, stores and victualling, and above all, to exercise his authority over the Guard. Day and night my brother spent in reorganizing the administration and inspecting the hospital work. Often he had to stand sword in hand at the depots and distribution centres. He hid nothing from the Emperor. The Guard, whom no one dared to criticize, was treated by him with no more respect than the other corps. The Emperor made some examples; discipline was once more established, and eventually a regular distribution of rations was carried out. During this period the Emperor was occupied, with his accustomed activity, in reorganizing everything. He lived in the Governor's palace,³

¹ Auguste Jean Gabriel de Caulaincourt, younger brother of the Duke of Vicenza, was born September 15, 1777. He entered the army January 6, 1792, as a volunteer in the 8th Regiment of Cavalry, was promoted Major of the 9th Dragoons on August 24, 1801, and was appointed aide-de-camp to Prince Louis Bonaparte, June 9, 1804. On June 5, 1806, he was authorized to enter the Dutch service and on June 21st of the same year became Master of the Horse to King Louis. Re-entering the French service as General of Brigade on February 10, 1808, he was promoted General of Division, September 7, 1809. He was killed soon afterwards at the Battle of the Moskowa, September 7, 1812. General de Caulaincourt had commanded the cavalry of the 8th Corps in Spain after having been employed in the 2nd Corps of that army, and was retired for reasons of health on February 28, 1810. He was then appointed Master of the Pages.

² The nomination of General de Caulaincourt as commandant of the Imperial General Headquarters was dated July 7, 1812.

³ This very modest palace had been the residence of the Governor of White Russia.

TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES

and caused the open space in front of it to be enlarged.¹ The men of the Guard were employed in these works. The heat was excessive, and it was a real pleasure for the army to be able to get a few days' rest at this juncture. The heads of the various services repaired to headquarters, and the Emperor showed his very marked displeasure towards those who had failed him, often even to those who had, so to speak, achieved the impossible.

"It has got to be done," he said to any who sought to excuse themselves by vaunting their efforts.

As for those who spoke of their devotion and zeal:

"I value those sentiments only when they result in success," he answered them.

In this respect the Emperor made himself out to be more difficult than he really was, for, though he did not show it, since it was one of his principles not to praise anyone, he observed, and highly appreciated, men who were zealous and anxious to do their duty.

From a spirit of inexplicable and unpardonable meanness the provisioning of the ambulances had been inadequate. Even the personnel was too scanty. In fact, the army's means of transport, even for the artillery, were wholly insufficient. The Emperor was always anxious to obtain the utmost possible with the least possible expense, with the result that, on moving large depots, almost everything had been loaded into wagons in the hope of being able to commandeer horses in the country, as had been usual in other campaigns, and so provide trace-horses and replace casualties as they befell. But Russia supplied no means for doing this. Horses, cattle, all had fled together with the inhabitants; we found ourselves as if in the heart of a desert. Every branch of the service had abandoned the greater part of its equipment by the roadside.

Never had carelessness been carried to greater extremes by the underlings of the administration: never had the courage of unfortunate men been more abused. The army

¹ For this purpose he pulled down several wooden houses that were an obstruction, to enable him to hold reviews. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 125.) This demolition was begun on August 1st and completed on the 6th.

surgeons and the administrative chiefs, as praiseworthy for their zeal as for their talents, were in despair at the state in which they found the hospitals. In vain did they endeavour to make up for whatever was lacking by their care and attention. We had got only as far as Witepsk, we had not fought a battle, and there was not even any surgical lint!

The Emperor was extremely preoccupied, and often in such surly humour that he was careless in the expressions he used towards those persons who displeased him, though such behaviour was by no means usual with him. He was greatly struck by the departure of the townsfolk and the flight of the country people. This method of retreat opened his eyes, maybe, to the possible consequences of this war, and to the distance it might take him from France; but the thousand-and-one things that ought to have opened his eyes to his position vanished before the slightest incident which might revive his hopes. A captured Russian officer brought to headquarters raised his spirits. He assured the Emperor that battle was certain to be given before Witepsk, that it had only been put off because a letter had been received on the 27th from Prince Bagration, containing news that he would not be able to join the army until they reached Smolensk. The Emperor flattered himself that as soon as the Russian army had joined up with Bagration it would make an attack.

Full of hope, he immediately recovered his good temper. The King of Naples, who, like the Emperor, had constantly been nibbling at the Russians, while doing ten or twelve leagues a day, and whose hopes for a success on the morrow had confused the calculations of daily losses by forced marches, realized his weakness as soon as he was in position. He saw with apprehension the decreasing strength of his regiments, most of which were reduced to less than half their numbers. At the urgent request of General Belliard,¹ he sent him to the Emperor. Forage and stores of all sorts were lacking, for his forces were always in close order and on the alert. Arrangements had not been made for rationing the men during the first few days, and the Cossacks were already

¹ Belliard was at that time acting major-general of cavalry.

hindering them from bringing up stores. The horses were not shod, the harness was in a deplorable state, the forges, like all the rest of the material, had been left in the rear; the greater number of them, indeed, had been abandoned and lost. There were no nails, no smiths, nor any iron suitable for making the former. Nothing had been thought of beforehand, and the most indispensable things were lacking. For some days the men were turned to grinding corn, and the ovens built by the Emperor's orders were put into service. He strove to infuse everyone with his own activity, but everything proceeded listlessly.

The Emperor had two plans. One was not to go far from Witepsk, but to accept battle in that neighbourhood; the other plan, and the one which he preferred, was to advance and attack the enemy, for he thought it would be more to his advantage to force him to a fight. In either case he hoped to push the enemy far enough back to make himself master of the country, and then to act as he chose. After that he reckoned on being able to reinforce the Dwina Corps, fight Wittgenstein,¹ take up more extended positions and quarters, give his troops some rest and himself time to reorganize everything, collect the resources of the country and bring up reinforcements and supplies of which he had urgent need.

In addition to this, while leaving the Dwina Corps to their own resources until the arrival of reinforcements, he could threaten one of the capitals with his army, and thus force the Russians to yield either Petersburg or Moscow, or to run the risks of a battle which he felt sure of winning, and which would result in proposals of peace in order to save the threatened capital. His conversations with the Prince of Neuchâtel, and two discussions he had with myself, were all to this effect. If once he could gain his first battle he seemed inclined to stay at Witepsk, so that he could reinforce the Dwina Corps and drive back Wittgenstein's. In this event he would organize the country, bring up his reinforcements, and

¹ Wittgenstein covered the Petersburg road with 25,000 men. On July 31st he attacked and beat Oudinot at Zakubowo, whereupon he installed himself between Drouia and Drissa.

make all the preparations for a second campaign, if these proposals for peace upon which he was counting did not materialize. The Emperor never ceased to tell us that the Russian army, which could and ought to have been in such strength, and which he had been informed was complete, numbered no more than 150,000 men, including Wittgenstein and the small corps; that the Tsar Alexander was being cheated by his generals and quartermasters, that he had no more than skeleton corps on account of the abuses committed by non-combatants. He often repeated this to me, and added that he was sure that we were as much mistaken in the climate as in everything else, that this country was like France, except that winter lasted longer, and that for six or seven months they had the intense cold which occasionally lasted with us a week or a fortnight. These reproaches, often made with bitterness, were renewed on every possible occasion. In vain did I represent to the Emperor that I had exaggerated nothing, that I had told him the whole truth, as the most loyal of his servants. I could not persuade him. Once, however, while we were staying at Witepsk, he did me the honour of talking to me without the least sharpness, notwithstanding that he still laboured under the same illusions. He believed there would be a battle, because he wanted one, and he believed he would win it, because it was essential that he should. He had no doubt at all that the Tsar Alexander would be compelled by his nobles to ask for peace, since that result was the basis upon which all his schemes were laid.

No amount of reasoning, not even the experiences he had met with since the Niemen, nothing could enlighten him as to the fatality looming ahead. The sight of his soldiers, their enthusiasm at the sight of him, the reviews and parades, and, above all, the frequently coloured reports of the King of Naples and certain other generals, went to his head; notwithstanding various sane inspirations which resulted from his own reflections or those communicated to him at opportune moments by others, his intoxication persisted.

But there were moments during our stay at Witepsk, when Russia might have made peace without having to make

THE EMPEROR'S CHANGING MOODS

sacrifices, if she had allowed the Emperor a free hand with the Polish Duchy and Galicia, as well as northern Germany. Some expressions to this effect escaped him when he was complaining of the inhabitants of Lithuania and Wolhynia who, he said, had forgotten their Polish birth and had turned Russian.

"It is not worth the trouble of fighting a long time," he added, "for a cause about which these people now care so little."

If the Emperor occasionally saw the situation and the consequences of this war in their true light, if for a moment he spoke of it dispassionately, the next instant his conversation took an entirely different turn. He was obsessed once more by his old illusions and returned to his gigantic projects. The most insignificant skirmish, the arrival of reinforcements, the appearance of some ammunition wagons, a report from the King of Naples, a few cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" at a parade, and above all the letters from Wilna,¹ were enough to turn his head once more.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was snapped at all day long, and overwhelmed with disagreeable things in return for his freedom of speech, his inconceivable activity, his unflagging devotion. The Emperor's vexation with him rose to such a pitch that the Prince frequently expressed his intention of going back to Grosbois, as he was no longer of any service. As a matter of fact, a number of things went wrong. The staff foresaw nothing, but on the other hand, as the Emperor wanted to do everything himself and to give every order, no one, not even the general staff, dared to assume the responsibility of giving the most trifling order. The administration, deprived, as we have seen, of the means of execution and transport, was quite unable to produce the results demanded by the Emperor, or to carry out orders which he gave without troubling himself as to how they should be executed. He would with reason complain of all the army services for doing little or nothing, but the services in their turn had every reason to complain of the Emperor who had brought them

¹ The Duke of Bassano, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was at Wilna.

into a country where it was impossible to find the supplies on which His Majesty had certainly reckoned since he was accustomed to find them in Germany or Italy. Everybody was discontented, and it needed all the Emperor's strength of character and his reputation for firmness to impose his will.

Severe, and even harsh, as the Emperor was with the Prince of Neuchâtel, the latter at every opportunity discussed the affairs of France with him, spoke of the weakness of our cavalry, the state of the artillery, the consequences that might follow the slightest reverse, and the discontent existing in Germany. His observations were seldom received in the right spirit, but this did not prevent him from returning to the charge. The Emperor often told him that it was Caulaincourt who put these ideas into his head, that he was making a Russian of him. Nor did I often miss my share of his ill humour, especially when the occasion arose of my talking to him in the same strain. Things came to the point of the Emperor taking a dislike even to the persons forming the Prince's general staff. M. Bailly de Monthyon,¹ who was the moving spirit of the staff, Count Dumas,² the zealous and active chief of the administration, and M. Joinville,³ were the constant objects of His Majesty's prejudice; they had become objects of his dislike. We had never seen him in such a state of irritability, and this made the campaign even more painful for us.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was not discouraged any more than myself or the rest of us, and we made a point of seizing every opportunity to enlighten His Majesty as to the real state of affairs, and to allay the spirit of excitement which tended to involve us entirely in adventure. Counts Lobau

¹ François Gédéon, Count Bailly de Monthyon, born at Isle de Bourbon, January 27, 1776, died at Paris, September 7, 1850. When acting captain he attracted the notice of Berthier at the battle of Marengo, and was attached to his staff. In this position he served in every campaign of the Empire and was promoted General of Brigade, May 22, 1818. He became General of Division, December 4, 1812 and was created a Peer of France, October 3, 1837.

² Count Mathieu Dumas (1753-1837) was Intendant-Général of the Grand Army.

³ Baron Louis Joinville (born at Paris, January 5, 1773, died March 29, 1849), was Chief Pay Commissioner of the Grand Army.

and Durosnel, and several others of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, also spoke freely to him about the state of the army when they found an opportunity; and they even made opportunities to do so. Never was the truth so dinned into the ear of a sovereign; but, alas, to no effect. But it is only fair to say that, if the Emperor was far from welcoming the truth because it ran counter to his wishes, he did not reject it violently. At bottom he was not even unduly aggrieved against those who had the courage to tell it, perhaps because he attached no value to it. I have sometimes known the Emperor, when nothing had occurred to upset him, to do me the honour of talking to me with the utmost calmness, permitting me to make all kinds of observations, and even agreeing with me that he had already gone far enough, and that it would be advantageous to wait for peace while in his present position rather than to seek it in the heart of Russia. But these moments were fleeting.

Those who had access to the Emperor were worried by the state of irritation engendered in him by the annoyances of the campaign as much as by the intoxication arising from his illusions, which were encouraged by the very small number of persons who still shared them. Everyone redoubled his efforts to overcome the inconveniences of a position daily becoming more difficult. The Prince of Neuchâtel, the Duke of Friuli, Counts Daru, Lobau, Durosnel, Turenne,¹ Narbonne,² the Duke of Piacenza,³ were all along those who lost no chance of enlightening the Emperor, and to mention them is but to render homage to a love of the truth to which their characters had long since been consecrated. The detractors of this great epoch may say what they like; never was sovereign

¹ Henri Amédée Mercure de Turenne (1776-1852) after serving as Orderly Officer to the Emperor, was promoted to be Chamberlain and Grand Master of the Wardrobe after the dismissal of M. de Rémusat.

² Count Louis de Narbonne was at that time personal aide-de-camp to the Emperor.

³ Caulaincourt is not here referring to Le Brun, first Duke of Piacenza, who did not die until 1824, and in 1812 was still Governor-General of Holland. He refers to his son, Anne-Charles, who succeeded his father in the title. Born in Paris, December 28, 1775, he died in Paris, January 21, 1859. He was General of Brigade, March 1, 1807, and General of Division, February 23, 1812. Since March 5, 1800, he had been Napoleon's aide-de-camp.

surrounded by more capable men, men who were honest before all else, and not mere courtiers, however strong the admiration and attachment which they professed for the great man. Our extraordinary circumstances evoked not so much ambition as zeal and devotion. In spite of the varying shades of character and habits of each of them, wherever the Emperor cared to probe he was sure to find, if he wanted it, a sterling and even disagreeable truth rather than mere flattery.¹ Whether because there had been a surfeit of glory, or because common sense had taught us to distrust its glamour, the fact remains that no one was intoxicated with it. We remained moderate, and good Frenchmen above all.

It must be credited to the honour of the Emperor that his principles, his impartiality, the staunchness of his confidence, which kept the spirit of intrigue at arm's length, had all contributed to the birth and growth of these noble sentiments. The master's well-known dislike of any change gave everyone a sense of security which proved greatly to the advantage of truth. His strength of will had united all opinions and checked all private ambitions. France and the Emperor were blended in a glory which had become common to both. He had subjugated all minds and, without their knowing it, had bent the wills of all men to co-operate in the accomplishment of his own. Who has not been carried away by the ascendancy of that superior genius, by the pre-eminently sovereign qualities, by his good nature, which was that of a private man in his own intimate circle? Who has not admired in him the great captain, the legislator, the restorer of social order, the man, in short, to whom the country owed its internal prosperity and the end of civil war? The Revolution checked, religion re-established, our laws, our administration, our industry increased by a hundred-

¹ It is interesting to compare this passage with what Ségur says: "These ministers and generals, in whatsoever concerned each of them, did not conceal the truth from the Emperor. If he got cross, Duroc, without yielding, wrapped himself up in a cloak of impassiveness; Lobau became rude; Berthier groaned and went away with tears in his eyes; as for Caulaincourt and Daru, one pale and the other flushed with anger, they vehemently repelled the Emperor's denials, the first with impetuous doggedness and the other with cold and dry firmness." (Ségur, *Histoire et Mémoires*, IV, 93.)

fold, the prosperous state of our finances—was not all this a constant proof to us of our debt to the Emperor, and of what we could still hope for from him? If some persons, however, perceived the dangers of a collapse, when such continual success and glory were so likely to delude the good sense of the majority, their foresight only applied to the particular situation in which they found themselves.

The Emperor had changed the national character. The French had become serious; the bearing was grave; the great questions of the day preoccupied all minds; petty interests were subordinated; the general sentiment was, one may say, patriotic; one would have blushed to show any other. The men who surrounded the Emperor prided themselves on not flattering him. Some even paraded the need of telling him the truth at the risk of displeasing him. It was the spirit of the time. This reflection cannot have escaped those with observation. Opposition, as the Emperor noticed, did not cause the zeal or devotion of anyone to relax. He paid little attention to it, and attributed it in general to narrow views, and to the fact that few people were capable of grasping his great projects in their entirety. It is certain that this opposition, if I may judge from my own case, arose solely from the wish to protect the interests of the Emperor's peculiar glory. What personal sentiment or interest could have held sway amid such a unanimous concert of devotion? Who could then foresee what has since happened? I can assert that no one was moved except by the interests of France, and the need of preserving the prodigies of the Emperor's glory. Only this double interest could be opposed to the gigantic enterprises of that glory, all the dangers of which a secret instinct seemed now to be revealing. There is no doubt that this enthusiasm of the Emperor, the ambition that induced him to run such hazards so far from France, scared everyone as soon as the trend of events began to breed doubts of success. Moreover, everyone blamed him in private, though the peace, always rejected by England, and represented by the Emperor as the motive of all his enterprises, justified him in the eyes of a nation over which power and

imagination would ever hold more influence, and even dominion, than reason and experience.

Only ten days had elapsed after our arrival at Witepsk before it became necessary to send ten or twelve leagues for fodder. The inhabitants who had not fled were everywhere in arms; consequently it was impossible to find any means of transport. Horses already in need of rest were further enfeebled by having to go in search of food, and were exposed, together with the men, to the danger of being caught by the Cossacks or massacred by the peasants, as frequently happened.

The corps commanders not actually in the front line came to Witepsk in turn, as well as the chiefs of the administration. The Emperor saw them with the officers of the general staff at the parade, and afterwards talked with them. Every day he went on horseback to make extensive reconnaissances of the neighbourhood, and several times during the day visited the ovens and bakeries. The camps and bivouacs which had been occupied by the Russians attracted his attention several times as being likely to give some indication of the enemy army's strength. He repeated that the enemy was considerably below the numbers that he had estimated at the opening of the campaign.

On August 7th or 8th, the enemy carried out a strong reconnaissance against General Sébastiani's Corps, which was forced to retire¹ and give up some of its posts. On first hearing news of this the Emperor was delighted. He thought the whole Russian army was on the move and that the hour for the long-desired battle had at last struck. But his hope was short-lived. He learned immediately that it had only been a reconnaissance; yet it might be the prelude to a general movement of the army, and he flattered himself it was so, until the next day. Then, judging the actual projects of his adversary by his previous dispositions, he began to despair of seeing him take the decision of giving battle as

¹ It was on August 8th that Barclay sent a strong advance-guard of cavalry composed of Platow's Cossacks and Pahlen's Cavalry against Inkowo where Sébastiani was in quarters with Montbrun's Light Cavalry and a battalion of the 24th Light Infantry. The French were compelled to retreat after losing from four to five hundred men.

soon as he knew for certain that the attack had not been followed up and that the enemy had retired.

Having no further hopes that the enemy would attack him, as he had made himself believe when he knew that Prince Bagration had joined up with the main army,¹ and on the other hand being unable to give his own army the rest it needed so long as the enemy was in force, so close at hand, the Emperor decided on the 10th to follow him; he announced his intention of moving his right across the Dnieper at Rossassna,² while the Russians, with the same object in view, would carry out the same movement in order to attack us on the right bank of that river.³ The Emperor left Witepsk on the 12th at eleven o'clock in the evening. On the morning of the 13th he was at Rossassna on the left bank of the Dnieper; the Guard arrived during the day. A very weak garrison had been left at Witepsk with the sick and wounded. The Emperor planned to fight a big battle and drive back the enemy so that he should be able to rest his army and organize the country for winter quarters, while with the same end in view his corps on the Dwina should act. Still fixed in his original purpose, he desired to organize everything so as to be in a position to march on the capitals when the spring campaign opened, if the measure he hoped to take and the difficulties the Russian Government would encounter did not induce the Petersburg cabinet to make peace during the winter, or even before. The Emperor counted on this happening more than ever, for he was already tired of the war and, as he said, would not raise difficulties in the matter of peace conditions.

The Emperor mounted his horse on reaching Rossassna, watched the corps on the march, made a very extended reconnaissance beyond Liadouï, and did not return to his quarters at Rossassna until nightfall. The next morning⁴

¹ Bagration had actually arrived at Smolensk on August 4th; Barclay had been there since the 2nd.

² Murat, Ney, Eugène, Morand, Friant and Gudin began their march on August 11th, in the direction of the Dnieper, which they reached at Liadouï and Rossassna. They crossed the river during the night of the 13th-14th.

³ The Russians had actually decided to take the defensive on the 7th in three columns. They gave up this plan on the 8th.

⁴ August 14th.

he was in the saddle at daybreak. He went along the banks of the Dnieper, gathered information and received the reports of several reconnaissances carried out by Polish troops who had been ordered to scour both banks of the river. The Guard was ordered to move and the Emperor led it in person to Krasnoë. On the way he learned that the cavalry had come to blows with a Russian division which, it was supposed, had been sent to cover Krasnoë.¹ He started off at a gallop, but heard shortly afterwards that the skirmish was over, and met the guns taken by our troops, which were being brought back by the brave fellows who had captured them. Every man received a handsome gratuity and the pieces were handed over to the Guard, with orders to take care of these first trophies of the campaign. According to the reports received by the Emperor, the Russian division, supported by some Cossack squadrons, was far from expecting to encounter the shock of our cavalry. Nevertheless it showed a good face, formed square, and valiantly defended the guns and its ground. It was impossible to break the squares, but the corners were turned at every charge, some men were sabred in the gaps between them, and in their retreat they lost seven guns. The enemy kept such a firm bearing that they held together till the end of the day and gained some defiles that saved them from complete destruction.

When night fell the Emperor returned to the Guard's bivouac near Liadouï.² The information obtained from some wounded prisoners made an end to all the Emperor's uncertainties and confirmed his knowledge of the movement of Barclay de Tolly on the right bank which he had been led to suspect since midday by the report of a reconnaissance. All corps were ordered to press their march on Smolensk. The Emperor set out with the Guard before daybreak, hoping to reach the place in advance of the Russian Army, in front of which we had unknowingly defiled in going to Rossassna by way of Babinowitschi.

¹ Grouchy's Horse had encountered the Nieverovsky Division, thrown by Bagration along the left bank of the Dnieper, and had driven it back on Krasnoë and Korythia.

² This bivouac was established at Boyarinkowa, between Liadouï and Krasnoë.

SMOLENSK

Very early in the morning of the 15th, he went at a gallop to the advance-guard, at the gates of Smolensk. Having invested the town closely, he quickly reconnoitred the environs. The enemy appeared in force, our troops came up, and the day was passed in bombardments and minor attacks to straighten his positions and get as near the town as possible. On the morrow¹ the investment was made yet closer; a cemetery and several houses which commanded the plateau on which the town is built were destroyed. An adjutant sent out by General Dalton² to observe from a windmill noticed, during the morning, that the Russians were sending out troops. The General went to observe for himself, and ascertained that two or three regiments were formed up beneath the walls, with others following them. The Emperor gave orders that the cordon round the town should be drawn tighter and these troops pushed back, and if possible captured. The attack was hotly fought. General Dalton and all the brigade colonels were wounded in their bold repulse of the enemy right back to the walls of the town. He debouched from the right of the salt warehouses between the town and the outlying houses, but his wound delayed the action, which had no further result. The Russians stood their ground bravely to the death, but did not hold the position.

That evening the Emperor brought some guns into position to bombard the bridge, which could be seen plainly enough to observe the troops defiling across it, some entering the town, others marching out of it.

A little later it was seen that these were Barclay's last corps arriving, and that part of the garrison had been relieved by them. What was the reason of this change? Did it foreshadow yet another retreat? The Emperor was puzzled, and at once became annoyed at the idea of having to march on and move yet further from his base, so as to come

¹ August 16th.

² Alexandre, Count Dalton (born at Brive, April 10, 1775, died at Paris, March 20, 1859), was promoted General of Brigade, March 21, 1809, and in 1812 commanded the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division (Morand). He was seriously wounded in the left foot by a Biscayan while marching at the head of the 13th Light Infantry, August 16, 1812. In 1815 he defended the citadel of Erfurt and was gazetted General of Division, April 13, 1815.

up with this army which he could have forced into giving battle had he attacked forty-eight hours earlier. He asked me what I thought of these movements of troops. He tried to make me say that the Russians would hold and fight a battle, which was what he wanted. He was like a man in need of consolation. Thinking, on the contrary, that the Russians no longer had the initiative for attacking, and, being thus unable to choose their positions, would prefer to retire, I said so very plainly.

"If that is so," answered the Emperor, in the tones of a man who has suddenly reached a decision, "by abandoning Smolensk, which is one of their holy towns, the Russian Generals are dishonouring their arms in the eyes of their own people. That will put me in a strong position. We will drive them a little further back, to ensure that we are left undisturbed. I will fortify my positions. We will rest the troops, and from this base we shall organize the country and see how Alexander likes that. I shall give my attention to the corps on the Dwina, which is doing nothing; my army will be more formidable and my position more menacing to the Russians than if I had won two battles. I will establish my headquarters at Witepsk. I will raise Poland in arms, and later on I will choose, if necessary, between Moscow and Petersburg."

Delighted to find the Emperor imbued with such good and sound ideas, I applauded his resolution; he seemed to me sublime, great, far-seeing, as in the day of his most splendid victory. I told him that this procedure would really lead to peace, as it would strengthen him in proportion to his advance, and would deter him from running too great risks. The Russian plan proved that they wished to draw him into the interior of the country, lead him further from his base, and shut him up amid the ice. It was imperative not to play their game, I added. His Majesty seemed to approve my reflections highly and to have finally made up his mind. I hastened to report my conversation to the Prince of Neuchâtel, so that he should do his utmost to hold the Emperor to his wise resolutions; but the Prince

seemed to be doubtful whether they would survive the taking of Smolensk. Alas, he was only too right: I had been so overjoyed at what I heard that I too had let myself be deluded!

On the 17th the Russians were compelled to evacuate all their positions outside the town. The Emperor brought up the siege batteries and placed thirty pieces to break down the bridge, which was plainly visible now that we were close to the town. This battery so harassed the enemy that his columns defiled across it at the double. They were clearly in full retreat. Wishing to launch an assault, the Emperor, some engineer officers, and some of the staff decided to reconnoitre the enceinte, but they had no scaling ladder. Finally, the reports which he received made the Emperor decide to abandon that project. Towards evening the enemy's retreating movements were unmistakable. The town had been on fire since the morning, and the flames, fed by the enemy themselves, showed no sign of abating. During the night the conflagration grew worse. It was a frightful sight, and the cruel prelude to what we were to behold at Moscow. Unable to sleep, I walked about (it was two o'clock in the morning), reflecting mournfully on the consequences that must ensue from this war if the Emperor did not pursue the good intentions he had manifested on the previous day. These scenes of horror and devastation inspired in me, I believe, a presentiment of those of which I was later to be the unhappy witness. My conversation with the Emperor continually came to my mind, and consoled me a little, but the Prince of Neuchâtel's observations were no less insistent, and my experience led me only too surely to share his opinion and his apprehensions. The night was cold. I drew near to a fire burning before the Emperor's tent, on the side facing the town,¹ and was growing drowsy as I sat before it when His Majesty came up with the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Duke of Istria. They gazed at the flaming town; it lit up the whole horizon, which at the same time sparkled with our own bivouac fires.

¹ The Emperor's tent was pitched near the manor of Ivanovskai.

"An eruption of Vesuvius!" cried the Emperor,¹ clapping me on the shoulder and awakening me from my torpor. "Is not that a fine sight, my Master of Horse!"

"Horrible, Sire!"

"Bah!" rejoined the Emperor. "Remember, gentlemen, what one of the Roman emperors said, 'the corpse of a dead enemy always smells good!'"

We were all shocked by this remark. For my own part, I at once recalled what the Prince of Neuchâtel had said; and this and the Emperor's observation long haunted my inmost thoughts. I looked at the Prince; and we glanced meaningly at one another, as men who understand each other without speaking; and we knew only too well that we could not reckon on the wise inspirations which had so recently rejoiced my heart.

At four o'clock in the morning² some marauders who had been on the watch made their way into the town through some old breaches that the enemy had not so much as repaired; and at five o'clock the Emperor learned that the place was evacuated.³ He gave orders that the troops should not enter except in formation, but the men had already got in by several loopholes which they had opened and scaled. The Emperor mounted his horse, reconnoitred the enceinte on the east, and entered the town by an old gap in the wall. He went all round the city at once, and eventually stationed himself at the bridge, where he spent the day hastening on the work of repairing it.

The public buildings in the great square and the finest houses in the town had been but little damaged. The arsenal was intact, though very little of anything was left in it.

¹ Napoleon made use of this expression in his 15th bulletin, dated from Smolensk, August 21st: "The city, however, was in flames. Throughout a fine August night Smolensk offered to the French a similar spectacle to that afforded to the inhabitants of Naples by an eruption of Vesuvius." In a letter to Félix Faure, dated from Smolensk, August 19, 1812, Stendhal speaks of "such a fine sight," of "so rare a spectacle" as the fire afforded. (*Correspondance de Stendhal*, Paris, 1908, I, 381.)

² August 18th.

³ The Russian movement had started at one o'clock in the morning, August 18th.

Every quarter of the town had suffered; the inhabitants had fled with the army, the only people left being some old folk of the lowest classes, a priest and an artisan. They told us all they knew about what had happened in the town, but could give no information concerning the army, not even what its losses had been. The Emperor seemed very satisfied, even triumphant.

"Before a month is out," he said, "we shall be in Moscow; in six weeks we shall have peace."

These words of prophecy by no means carried conviction to everyone, at least so far as peace was concerned.

This Moscow project, although it was the result promised by the Emperor with such confidence, pleased no one. Our distance from France, and above all, the manifold hardships ensuing from these new tactics of the Russians, who destroyed even the houses they were forced to abandon, robbed the glory of all its glamour. Marshal Ney had made all preparations for crossing the Dnieper a league from the town, in order to follow up the Russians,¹ whose rear-guard only was in sight; pursuing the enemy, he found them in position at Valutina. General de Borrelli,² who was attached to the staff of the King of Naples, came to inform the Emperor of this. He refused to believe that they would offer any resistance, or that anyhow there was more than a rear-guard in position; but successive reports convinced him that it was a more considerable corps. He proceeded thither himself and immediately sent several officers to the Duke of Abrantès, and even the Prince of Neuchâtel, with orders to advance and engage the Russians, without letting a single man escape. In the meantime Marshal Ney had attacked and overthrown the enemy with his usual boldness; but a grenadier division, sent to reinforce the rear-guard, held the position despite a fresh attack by Gudin's division. This General, one of the most distinguished in the army, was mortally wounded at the

¹ Ney passed the Dnieper in the morning of the 19th.

² Charles Luce Paulin Clément de Borrelli (born at Villefort, Lozère, December 20, 1771, died at Paris, September 22, 1849) was only promoted General of Brigade on September 11, 1812. He became General of Division on July 6, 1815. In August 1812 he was second on the staff of Murat.

start of the action,¹ and lived but a short while. He died esteemed by the whole army and mourned by all who knew him. This occurrence did not hinder the troops from taking the first position, but the enemy were successively reinforced, and the Duke of Abrantès, who was to have outflanked him and turned his left, did not come up in time,² and so the Russians held the crest of their position until nightfall. When the Emperor reached a point which gave him a view over the whole countryside, he again sent orders to the Duke of Abrantès to act with vigour.

"Barclay is mad," he said. "That rear-guard is ours, even if Junot only marches here at ease."

The Emperor learned of the end of the affair before he reached Valutina, and returned to Smolensk ³ highly incensed with the Duke of Abrantès, who had not acted with the vigour he had shown on previous occasions. The Prince of Neuchâtel and the Dukes of Istria and Elchingen reproached him for not having marched up fast enough; for his part, the Duke of Abrantès, whose corps was composed of foreign troops, contended that, since he was obliged to march in close order so as to run no risks, his movement had been delayed by obstacles which forced him to bear to the right. From what the Prince of Neuchâtel and the King of Naples said, no such obstacles existed. I remember the different reports that were made to the Emperor. At the sound of gunfire the King of Naples went in person to the Duke of Abrantès, whose corps was in front of his own. Seeing how useful, and indeed how glorious a diversion he could make, the King pressed him to hasten his movements.

"You are annoyed at not being a Marshal," he said. "Here is a fine chance! Take it! You are sure of winning your baton."

While waiting for his cavalry to come up, the King placed

¹ Wounded by a bullet in both his legs, with one thigh torn off, and a calf lacerated, he was taken to Smolensk, where he died, August 22, 1811.

² Junot, ill and discouraged, after crossing the Dnieper at Prouditchevo, had been seized with a fit of indecision from which Gourgaud, sent to him by the Emperor, was unable to rouse him. Cf. Gourgaud, *Napoléon et la Grande Armée en Russie*, Paris, 1825, 172.

³ He returned to his headquarters about five o'clock in the evening.

himself at the head of the Württembergers who formed the Duke's advance guard, with the object of beginning and pressing on the advance, at the same time making the Duke promise to support him. When the King put this cavalry to the charge, they would have distinguished themselves and driven back the Russians, but the Duke of Abrantès's corps did not follow up, and the King was obliged to slacken his movement for fear of being imperilled; he had to wait for his own troops, who were still at some distance, although coming up at the trot. The Emperor's anger can readily be imagined when he received several reports of what had taken place.

"Junot has let the Russians escape," he said bitterly. "He is losing the campaign for me."

In his first moment of anger he coupled with this reproach the severest reflections and threats; but as usual the memory of past services well rendered overbore the wrongs of the moment, and his discontent had no sequel.

The Emperor busied himself with making Smolensk what he called his pivot, and a safe stronghold for his communications in the event of being reluctantly forced to push on further. He worked night and day with Count Daru¹ in attending to all the administrative details, notably for provisions and the requirements of the hospitals.

He had ordered several reconnaissances of the fortress and the environs. General de Chasseloup² having come to him with an account of what had been done, the Emperor remarked jokingly, "Wouldn't you like to make another Alexandria of the place and eat up another fifty millions of money? Russia is not worth that."

¹ Count Bruno Daru had been Minister Secretary of State since April 17, 1811. General Mathieu Dumas, *Intendant Général* of the Grand Army, writes in his *Précis des événements militaires, ou essais historiques sur les campagnes de 1799 à 1814* that during the war in Russia "M. Daru did not bear the title of *Intendant Général*, but he actually fulfilled the functions of that post. Working every day with the Emperor, he enlightened me by his advice, directed me, and notably during the retreat from Moscow when a grave illness kept me a long time from performing the duties entrusted to me, M. Daru took up my work without a qualm."

² François de Chasseloup-Laubat, born at Saint-Sornin (Charente Inférieure) on August 18, 1754, died at Paris, October 6, 1833. He had been General of Division since September 17, 1799. He was appointed Commandant-in-Chief of the Engineers in the Grand Army, June 27, 1812.

General de Chasseloup was proposing nothing of the sort; he only wanted to erect some outworks in order to form a point of defence on the Dnieper. The next day¹ the Emperor stopped all the work in hand, appearing to have no wish to go beyond Smolensk.

This retreat of the Russians, without any possibility of saying where they would halt, the increasing certainty that they had themselves set fire to Smolensk, and this war of mutual destruction with no result beyond the gaining of ground—all these circumstances gave food for serious thought to the Emperor, and confirmed his desire to go no further and to do his best to bring about negotiations. The following details can leave no doubt of his intentions, which he openly explained to the Princes of Neuchâtel and Eckmühl. After his arrival at Smolensk the Emperor inquired whether there was any slightly wounded officer or any man of some standing in the place. The only person they could find was a Russian officer, who had come, I believe, with a flag of truce and for some reason or another had been detained.² The Emperor interviewed him, and after a few insignificant questions, asked him if there was going to be a battle, adding that it would be dishonourable to the Russian arms to yield their country without giving battle, without even measuring their strength with us once at least. Thereafter it would be easy to make peace, as between two champions reconciled after a duel. The war, he said, was only a matter of politics. He wished for nothing better than that the Tsar Alexander should feel as little resentment as he did. The Emperor added later that he was going to send this officer back to his own army, on condition that he would repeat to the Tsar what he was going to tell him: namely, that he, the Emperor Napoleon, wished for peace, and that he had wanted nothing better than to have reached an understanding before war had broken out. The officer promised to convey these messages, but at

¹ August 20th.

² This refers to Count Orloff, officer in the Guards, who had come with a flag of truce to ask news of General Paul Alexeiev Tuchkoff, who had been made prisoner at Valutina. He was detained so that he should not be able to observe the movements of the army.

the same time observed that he did not think peace possible so long as the French were on Russian soil.¹

The King of Naples had been ordered to pursue the Russians. The Emperor had placed the Prince of Eckmühl under his command, particularly urging him to keep on pressing the enemy in such a manner that they should have no time to rally their forces and engage in battle; for his object was to push them as far away as possible, and so enable his own army to enjoy a rest. At all events, the Emperor had made me arrange for relays so that he should be able to go quickly to the advance-guard in the event of important developments. In accordance with instructions given to the King of Naples, the Prince of Eckmühl was under his orders, but the instructions given to the latter were only that he should support the King if necessary, and not run any risks or engage in any general affair. He had thus an independent command² unless his help was needed. The Emperor had given him the same instructions verbally, and explained the purpose he had in view. In addition, he had written in the same sense on the morrow and on the following day, asking the Marshal for information as to what was happening, adding that he did not wish to rely on the King's reports, as the latter was so easily carried away just when he, the Emperor, did not wish to become involved.³

The Russian Army marched in good order, without undue haste, like people intent on abandoning nothing and prepared in case of necessity to hold their ground. The King of Naples believed that their good marching order showed their intention of giving battle. He even had the idea—it is not known why—that Barclay had taken up his position behind the Ouja,⁴ and that he was establishing entrenchments in front of Dorogo-

¹ See Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, I, 435) for a letter from Berthier to Barclay, dictated by Napoleon and dated from Rouibki, August 28th; also Madame de Stael (*Dis années d'exil*, in the Renaissance du Livre edition, 184).

² For an account of the disputes between Murat and Davout see *Correspondance de Davout*, III, 184.

³ Caulaincourt is probably alluding to the Emperor's letters to Davout, dated from Smolensk, August 22nd and 23rd. (*Correspondance*, 19115 and 19123.)

⁴ An affluent of the Dnieper, which flows into that river at Ouswiat.

bouje in preparation for this battle.¹ The King thought this might be the battle for which the Emperor had expressed so many hopes, and if we gained it the army could be ensured of a long rest in billets without being forced to leave its base too far behind. Our numerical superiority and our habit of success justified us in believing that we should gain a victory. The King of Naples poured forth his dreams and hopes to the Emperor. I call them dreams, for Miloradovich's reinforcements had not come up,² and the Russians were in no position to give battle.

But these hopes were too attractive, and accorded too well with the Emperor's own views, not to sweep him off his feet. He left Smolensk³ in all haste. The Guard moved ahead in echelon to support the King of Naples if necessary, and was ordered to press forward; and once again the Emperor was forced into an adventure in some degree against his will. Reaching Dorogobouje on the 25th he stayed there throughout the 26th.⁴

Once more the gauntlet was thrown down, and the Emperor was not the man to turn back. The sight of his troops and all the warlike bustle exalted him. The wise reflections he had made in Smolensk yielded to the allurements of glory as soon as he found himself amidst these elements. It was said that we should overtake the enemy forces on the morrow; they were pressed; they could not always escape at the rate they were being driven. It was useless to expect real rest until a battle had been fought; otherwise we should be kept constantly anxious. In short, as many good reasons were found for pressing forward as had been discovered, forty-eight hours earlier, for staying at Smolensk, and once again we set off in pursuit of the glory, or rather the fatality,

¹ The Emperor to Eugène, dated Smolensk, August 24th, nine o'clock in the morning: "The King of Naples informs me that the armies are facing one another, and that the enemy has all his forces in battle formation at Dorogobouje." (*Correspondance*, 19124.)

² The 15,000 reinforcements brought up by Miloradovich did not join the army until August 27th.

³ The 25th, at one in the morning. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 141.)

⁴ Napoleon installed himself at Dorogobouje on the 25th at five in the evening, and started again on the 26th at half-past eleven in the evening.

which persisted in checking the Emperor's good intentions and wiser projects. These particulars, told to me by the Prince of Neuchâtel, have since been confirmed by the Prince of Eckmühl.

Nevertheless he¹ was at this moment tired and disgusted with this war, of which he could see no sign of the end. He complained about the Poles. From the very beginning of the campaign he had shown his discontent with Prince Poniatowski, because he had asked for assistance and funds, his troops not having been paid for a long time and being in need of many things.² The Emperor also made daily complaints that nothing was being done at Warsaw, that Lithuania was lukewarm, that the levies were not produced and that he was being asked for money, as if the Poles ought not to make some sacrifice for the restoration of their country. In this momentary disgust with Polish affairs he supplemented the direct complaints he had made through his minister and the ambassador by making the Prince of Neuchâtel write to Bignon,³ who corresponded with him: "The result of all this is that the government does very little, organization does not advance, the administration is not resourceful; in short, the country is of little use to us."⁴

The news of a success obtained by Prince Schwarzenberg over the Russians revived the Emperor's hopes.⁵

"This gives a colour to the alliance," he said. "That gunshot will boom in Petersburg, in my brother Alexander's

¹ The Emperor.

² See letter from the Emperor to Berthier, dated Wilna, July 9, 1812. (*Correspondance*, 18932.)

³ Baron Louis Pierre Edouard Bignon (1771-1841) was at that time the Emperor's commissioner to the Commission for the Government of Lithuania.

⁴ Cf. Napoleon to Maret, Smolensk, August 23, 1812. "It seems to me that Bignon is doing badly; he criticizes the governor instead of supporting him. The country is doing nothing . . . the government is asleep." (*Correspondance*, 19119.)

⁵ At the head of the Austrian corps Schwarzenberg had effected his junction with Reynier (7th Corps) and had placed himself in front of General Tormasov's army. On August 12th he attacked at Goroderzina, between Kobryn and Pruzany. The following night Tormasov retired on Kobryn. Schwarzenberg pursued him until August 29th. The two forces came to a halt on the two banks of the Styr, towards Luck, and remained in that position until the arrival of Tchitchagoff on September 18th.

throne-room. It is a good example for the Prussians; maybe their honour will be piqued."

He asked me if Prince Schwarzenberg was well known at Petersburg, and if his connections were with the most exalted personages of the Court. He granted him a second sum of 500,000 francs on account of secret expenses, and instructed the Prince of Neuchâtel to send him the bond.¹

On the 24th the Emperor made a demand at Vienna that rewards of honour should be given to this corps, and that all its advancement should be in its own unit.²

The Emperor took up his residence on the Ouja at Dorogobouje in a large house, a kind of manor or bailiwick on a hill. A little corn was found there, and this was all the more useful as the enemy had left nothing at Smolensk, and the first supplies that had been secured would barely have sufficed for the needs of the hospitals and the daily consumption. Several corps received long unwonted bread at Dorogobouje. Confirmation was received of details of the Tsar's arrival at Moscow on July 24th, of which we had known little and had only heard after our arrival in Smolensk. We heard that he had convoked the nobility and gentry, that he had not disguised from them the position of the State, and had asked all the governments for aid. Moscow had offered 80,000 men, and the others in proportion; Little Russia had given him 80,000 Cossacks and the rank and file of battalions, squadrons, and companies all fully equipped. To give this armament a national and religious character, Archbishop Platow, had offered the Tsar the miracle-working picture of St. Serge, which His Majesty had given to the Moscow militia. In short, a holy war was being preached against the French. It was also learned that the Tsar had sent the Grand Duke Constantine³ from Poltosk to Petersburg to raise the spirits of the public and press for levies, and to ensure that nothing should thwart General Barclay, to whom

¹ Napoleon to Berthier, Smolensk, August 24, 1812. (*Correspondance*, 19128.)

² Napoleon to Francis, Smolensk, August 24, 1812. (*Correspondance*, 19140.)

³ Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch, younger brother of the Tsar, born March 8, 1779, died June 27, 1831. He subsequently renounced his right to the throne in favour of his brother Nicholas.

the entire responsibility had thus been left for what might take place.¹

The Emperor Napoleon, who had left the Duke of Belluno² on the Niemen, although he had left Witepsk with the idea that he would stay in Smolensk, having decided to advance, sent an order from Dorogobouje to the Duke that he should proceed to Smolensk. Shortly afterwards there followed detailed instructions for the support, if necessary, of the corps which had been on our flanks up till then, notably that of Marshal Saint-Cyr on the Dwina.³

From Dorogobouje the army marched almost in line, the King's cavalry, the Guard, the 1st Corps and Marshal Ney's Corps on the road, the Poles on the right, the Viceroy on the left.

We found ourselves in the highest plateau in Russia, the watershed from which the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea, the Dnieper into the Black Sea, and the Dwina into the Baltic. Since crossing the Dnieper the troops and the artillery had become exhausted by the sand; but the supposed battle dispositions of Barclay demanded that the formation of troops should be as close as possible. Few prisoners had been made in the Valutina skirmish; in the great pursuit of the enemy we made none at all—not so much as a cart was seized. The Russians retired in good order, not leaving behind even a single wounded man. The inhabitants followed the army, leaving the villages completely deserted. The unfortunate town of Dorogobouje, which the Russians had left to us intact, was set on fire and burned by the camp-fires which our troops had lit too near the houses. For days many villages shared the same fate. The burning of Smolensk, completed by the Russians, had exasperated our soldiers, and in any case there was little order.

On the 27th headquarters were moved to the small manor-house of Slawkowo,⁴ on the afternoon of the 28th to Rouibkoio

¹ Cf. K. Waliszewski, *Le Règne d'Alexandre Ier*, II, 71.

² Victor commanded the 9th Corps.

³ Napoleon to Berthier, August 23rd and 26th. (*Correspondance*, 19120 and 19146.)

⁴ Castellane (*Journal*, I, 141) gives the name of Postea to the manor where imperial headquarters were established.

or Ribki. It was from here that the Emperor caused the Prince of Neuchâtel to write to General Barclay, taking as pretext the return of Orloff, who had come with a flag of truce to inquire for news of General Tuchkoff,¹ captured in a skirmish in the wood of Valutina.²

The Emperor was extremely anxious to secure the negotiation which he desired above all else, and took this chance of sending a few gracious words to the Tsar Alexander. He was also anxious to establish the fact that he felt no personal animosity, and that as this war was purely political there was no obstacle to an understanding at any time.

The silence observed by the Petersburg cabinet, as well as by the Commander-in-Chief, following on M. de Balachoff's mission, was attributed by the Emperor to his supposed animosity, which would make him reject any kind of overture or arrangement that was not based on the restoration of Poland and the dismemberment of that part of Russia. The Emperor often spoke in this sense to the Prince of Neuchâtel. On two occasions he said to me:

"Alexander sees clearly that his generals are simply making fools of themselves and that his country is being lost; but he has put himself into the hands of the English, and the London cabinet is stirring up the nobles and preventing them from coming to terms. He is being told that I want to take all his Polish provinces from him, and that he will never have peace except at that price. He cannot pay it, for the Russians, who all own land in Poland, would strangle him within a year if he yielded, just as they did his father. He is wrong in not trusting me, for I wish him no harm; I would even make sacrifices to save him from his embarrass-

¹ Tuchkoff, wounded in the head, had been taken to imperial headquarters by M. de Rohan-Chabot at midnight on the 19th. (*Castellane, Journal*, I, 138.)

² The Prince of Neuchâtel informed the Commander-in-Chief, Barclay de Tolly, that M. Orloff, officer in the Guards, who had been sent for news of General Tuchkoff (who had started for Metz), having been directed in error to Smolensk, had been directed on his return by our advance posts on the Wiasma road. He added that the Emperor Napoleon instructed him to inform the Emperor Alexander that no vicissitude of war nor any circumstances could modify the esteem and friendship he bore him, and he spoke of the exchange of prisoners. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

ments. If he were not possessed by this fear he would have written to me, and sent someone to discuss matters with me, for it is not in his interest to prolong this war."

"Nor in mine," he added, during a conversation at Smolensk; "for the Poles are without means of keeping up the struggle; the levies are not forthcoming; they do nothing for their own cause; every day they ask for money, and in Lithuania, thanks to the Russian occupation, they have got nothing but paper. The Poles would like Galicia, but it does not matter to them in the least that it would mean my becoming embroiled with Austria. I will not ruin France for their sake. If Alexander would send me some reliable person we should soon come to an understanding; he will not again get such good terms or find a better opportunity. I am not more wedded to Poland than to anything else. There are many ways of settling things. Let him declare himself against England and all will be straightforward. The Turks have made peace; Andréossy has not been able to stop the ratification.¹ Bernadotte has forgotten that he is a born Frenchman; to the shame of Sweden he is in league with the Russians.² This impolitic conduct will be cast in his teeth; and some day it will ruin him. It is unheard of that the two Powers who have all the claims against the Russians should become their allies when the occasion is so propitious for reconquering all that they have lost. Such a chance will never recur again. The army of Finland will reinforce Wittgenstein.³ The army of Moldavia will also be free for use, for the Turks will not so soon change from a state of peace to one of offensive war as to leave no time to observe what they are doing. English gold and the wiles of Alexander have done as much as Maret's lack of foresight. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

¹ The Treaty of Bucharest had been signed on May 28, 1812, subject to ratification by the sovereigns. These ratifications had been exchanged July 20, 1812.

² Russia and Sweden had already been bound secretly by the treaty of April 1812, and their alliance was consolidated by the treaties of the 12th and 18th July. The first was a treaty of peace between England and Sweden; the second a treaty of alliance between Russia and England.

³ The Emperor guessed aright, for the interview of Abo, between the Tsar and the Crown Prince of Sweden, had taken place on August 27th. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

ought to have assured me of the Swedes and the Turks, but no one has any idea of politics nowadays. I am not properly served at all; I have to do everything myself. France will never cease to reproach Maret with this. There is no lack of money, and at Constantinople it is easy to do anything with gold! That is how the Russians got their treaty signed; the same means should have been used to prevent the Turks from ratifying it. Sweden is so poor, and the interests of the country so obvious, that a million distributed to the proper parties, and several millions more to enable them to mobilize the army, would have done all that was wanted. This ineptitude has done me great harm; it has upset everything. Who could have expected that these two States would have acted in a way so contrary to their interests? Their policy was so clear, their course so obvious!"

I reminded His Majesty that M. de Bassano had not been able to despatch M. Andréossy without orders; that, so far as Sweden was concerned, it was his own insistence on the Continental System, the capture of Swedish ships, and, above all, the disarming of the regiments that had been sent to France as prisoners, which had wounded the self-esteem of that excessively proud nation. These reflections made the Emperor impatient, and he explained them away in his own manner. "You know nothing of affairs; you do not understand"—such were the words that put an end to this conversation.

News of the enemy decided the Emperor to proceed that evening to Nedikias.¹ On the 29th, we were at Wiasma, where M. de Lauriston rejoined His Majesty,² who had a long talk with him. The next day the Emperor remarked to me as we were on the march:

"Well, Caulaincourt, your friend Alexander did not want to make war, eh?"

"Your Majesty has had proof of that," I answered. "The

¹ At two leagues from Wiasma. The *Itinéraire de Caulaincourt* notes the departure of the Emperor for Kneghinkino.

² He came to take up once more his duties as aide-de-camp to the Emperor. On their departure from Petersburg Lauriston and the embassy staff had been sent by sea and were not able to disembark at Pillau before August 7th.

CONVERSATION WITH THE EMPEROR

peace he made with Turkey,¹ and many other events, have surely justified everything I have had the honour to say to Your Majesty."

"That is not what Lauriston said," said the Emperor. "Alexander must be pleased to have pushed things so far. His holy town is burned to the ground; his country has come to a pretty pass. He would have done better to come to terms. He has preferred to deliver himself into the hands of the English. Will they rebuild his burned cities? Lauriston says that the Tsar has been in negotiation with the English for a long time."

"Not in my time, Sire," I answered, "for he confiscated eighty of their vessels, and sold some; and others are still in confiscation."

"You have been duped, my good Master of the Horse!" rejoined the Emperor. "Their flatteries have turned your head."

"If I may be permitted to cast a doubt on what Your Majesty affirms, I would repeat that the Tsar Alexander only began to treat with them when our first gun was fired. All that has happened, and all that has been done, convinces me that he did not deceive me, and that Your Majesty has not been misled by me. The dates of the Turkish peace, and of the settlement with England, and the actual confiscation of English vessels about which Your Majesty is so doubtful, all these facts will be cleared up in time, and will prove my justification. Before six months pass Your Majesty will be acknowledging my frankness."

The Emperor seized this opportunity to speak bitterly once more about Turkey and Sweden, and to inveigh against M. de Bassano, to whom he attributed the failure of those Powers to co-operate. He agreed that the period when the peace with Turkey had been signed might turn out to be in favour of my assertions.

"But," he added ironically, "your friend Alexander is none the less a Greek, and false. Nevertheless, I owe him no grudge; I am even sorry, so far as he is concerned, that his

¹ Ratified after the passage of the Niemen.

country is suffering so severely. As soon as we can talk to one another, we shall soon come to an agreement, for I am only fighting a political war, and there are many ways of settling matters so that the Russians shall not be too disgruntled and assassinate him as they did his father."

The enemy did not leave a single man behind; they destroyed the warehouses and stores, burned their public buildings, and even the large houses. Some people believed that the burning of the cities and market-towns which we entered was due as much to the disorders of our vanguard as to the Cossack rear-guard, who cared little for Russia; I confess that at first I shared this opinion, not comprehending what object the Russians could have in destroying all their civilian buildings, and even private houses, which could not, after all, be of great service to us. Several persons spoke to the Emperor about these fires, and he ordered my brother to take a strong detachment of the Guard on the following day and press the enemy so closely as to enter at the same time as the rear-guard, and thus satisfy himself as to what really happened, and whether the Russians actually did set fire to the town.¹ These orders were exactly obeyed. The enemy rear-guard was in position, but evacuated the town after a hot engagement. My brother entered Wiasma in hot haste with some sharpshooters. The town was already in flames in various places; he saw Cossacks set light to inflammable material, some of which he discovered in different spots where fire broke out before the Cossacks had left the town. He set our troops to subdue the fire; everyone worked his hardest and some houses were saved, together with supplies of grain, flour and brandy. At first everything was preserved from destruction, but that did not last long. It was ascertained from particulars supplied by some of the inhabitants who had stayed in their houses, and notably from a very intelligent baker, that com-

¹ Napoleon to Berthier, August 29, 1812, at two leagues behind Wiasma: "As soon as you are in a position to enter Wiasma, send the gendarmerie there, General Caulaincourt, the Paymaster of Headquarters and the small headquarters. It will be forbidden to bake bread in the ovens in the town, for fear of setting fire to the place, and the best police force possible will be established." (*Correspondance*, 19156.)

plete arrangements had been made by a detachment of Cossack rear-guard long before our arrival, and that the place had been set on fire as soon as we came in sight. The fact is that in different houses, particularly those containing food supplies, combustibles had been methodically prepared and placed for this express purpose. In short, in that town, as in those we had seen and those we were yet to see, there was plain proof that the fire resulted simply from the measures ordered and prepared in advance.

These details, already furnished by inhabitants of other towns and villages, and which we had hitherto refused to believe, were confirmed with every step we took. Everyone was taken aback, the Emperor as well as his men, though he affected to turn this novel method of warfare into matter for ridicule. He often spoke to us jokingly of "people who burn their houses to prevent us sleeping in them for a night." He did his best to circumvent the grave reflections to which this terrible measure gave birth concerning the consequences and duration of a war from the very outset of which the enemy was prepared to make such sacrifices. The Emperor certainly made the same reflections himself, but he did not profit by them.

In spite of these fires, after leaving Dorogobouje the first arrivals found abundance of food, brandy, and even wine. The horrible spectacle of this dreadful destruction was therefore less staggering to men able to fill their bellies and having well-filled haversacks and canteens. There had been such desperate want and privation, such exhaustion, and Russia had appeared at first such a bad country, that the thermometer of many men's feeling, opinions and reflections was to be found in the pit of their stomachs.

In Poland everything had been lacking; at Witepsk, by dint of infinite pain and care, we had fared meagrely; at Smolensk, by searching the countryside we had found standing crops, grain, flour, cattle and even forage, but no brandy or wine. After Dorogobouje all was in flames, but the shops and cellars were well stocked, even to the point of luxury. The houses were soon found to contain hiding-places where

abundance of everything was discovered. The soldiers pillaged; nor could this be stopped, since there was no issue of rations, nor, as we were marching without transports and living from hand to mouth, could there be any such distribution. Most of the men fared well, even very well; it was the officers who sometimes suffered privation, for as they did not enter the houses until after they had been ransacked they could not share in the plunder. Thus the general or senior officer would be eating a piece of black bread at some soldiers' camp-fire where fowls were roasting alongside sheep, where ham was sizzling among hundreds of eggs. The luxury of the houses inside, their frequency, and size, were signs of the proximity of a great capital. Once again the soldiers became indefatigable.

The King of Naples, who was in command of the advance-guard, often covered ten or a dozen leagues a day. The men were in the saddle from three o'clock in the morning until ten at night. As the sun never sank beneath the horizon the Emperor forgot that the day contained no more than four-and-twenty hours. The Carabineers and Cuirassiers had been put with the advance-guard as support; the men as well as the horses were worn out, and great numbers were lost. The roads were littered with dead horses, but every day and every moment the Emperor flattered himself that he was about to make contact with the enemy. He needed prisoners at any price; they were the only source of information about the Russian Army, as spies had become useless from the moment we crossed on to Russian soil. The knout, or Siberia, cooled the zeal of the cleverest and most intrepid spy; besides, it was extremely difficult to penetrate into the country and, above all, into the army. The only information received was by way of Wilna; nothing came to us direct. Our marches were too long and too rapid, and our cavalry were too exhausted to send out reconnoitring parties, or even patrols on the flanks. Thus the Emperor was often unaware of events two leagues away. Whatever price we were willing to pay to make prisoners, we made none; the Cossacks took better care of themselves than we did; their horses were better cared for than ours, and were

more useful in a charge, being used only for that purpose and never being engaged in skirmishing.

By the end of the day our horses were so weary that a mere skirmish would cost us several brave fellows, their horses not being able to stand the pace. When our squadrons were recalled we saw troopers on foot, in the midst of the fray, dragging their horses by the bridle, and others obliged to abandon them altogether and escape on foot.

The Prince of Neuchâtel, Counts Durosnel and Lobau, and some other brave men in the Emperor's entourage, were continually presenting him with a picture of what was going on, and urging him to make the best of the means at his disposal, if he desired, as he said, to meet the enemy in battle or to push forward to Moscow. The Emperor listened to us, but as he always hoped to have on the morrow what escaped him that day, he was led on and on despite himself, and forced to cover a dozen leagues when he had intended to make only five. Like everyone else he was amazed at this retreat of an army of a hundred thousand men, who did not leave a single straggler or a solitary wagon behind. Not even a horse to mount a guide was to be found within a radius of ten leagues; we were obliged to put them on our own horses. Often not even a man could be found to serve as guide to the Emperor. The same man often led us for three or four days through a country which he knew no better than ourselves. The vanguard was in the same plight.

While we were following the Russian army, powerless to obtain the least information about it, great changes were taking place in its formation. General Kutusoff, who had been summoned to the command in deference to the opinion of the nobles, joined it at Tsarewo, between Ghjat and Wiasma, on the 29th, without Napoleon being aware of the fact.¹

Reinforcements flowed in from all quarters, and Milorado-

¹ On August 29th, Kutusof rejoined the army at Tsarewo, between Ghjat and Wiasma; Barclay kept in his own hands the command of the 1st Army, and Bagration that of the 2nd. In the meanwhile the Emperor Alexander had gone to Abo, where he saw the Crown Prince of Sweden on August 27th. A secret arrangement was signed on August 28th to postpone for one year the cession of Norway, which was guaranteed by the secret treaty of March 24 (April 5), 1812. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

vich was daily expected to join the Russians.¹ At Petersburg, as at Moscow, there was a universal outcry for war and extermination of the invaders, while the Emperor Napoleon was flattering himself that his peaceful assurances would lead to negotiations. We were threatening the capital city; the holy city was burnt down and occupied by the French; we were at the gates of Ghjat, and the Tsar, who had sent M. de Balachoff to Wilna, vouchsafed no answer to the overtures made to him from Smolensk.

This change in the attitude and policy of the Petersburg cabinet ought to have opened the Emperor's eyes. This proud bearing of the conquered towards the conqueror ought to have opened his eyes to the dangers of the invasion; but the fatality in which the Emperor Napoleon trusted continued to harry him, and his star, which he hoped to make shine with renewed glory by raising it aloft over this polar land, was in its turn to pay to this iron clime the tribute which he had hitherto exacted from the Russians themselves and all the other peoples of Europe. As I have said, the army was very weary, the cavalry and artillery already in a deplorable state, and the light troops so reduced in numbers that carabineers and cuirassiers had to be used as a support to the advance guard.

On the 31st headquarters was established at the manor of Weliczewo with the King of Naples, while the enemy retreated by stages, leaving only some Cossacks and occasionally one or two regiments of dragoons to cover their movement. Day and night the whole of our cavalry and part of the infantry were in full chase after them on foot, always in the hope of catching up with this foe who would never come to grips. The army had no means of subsistence save what was obtained by marauders, who were organized in detachments, and daily the Cossacks and peasants captured many men who were too venturesome. The more we advanced the more complete was the evacuation of the country. Not even old folk or the sick

¹ Miloradovich had rejoined the greater part of the Russian Army on August 27th. At the same time the Army was to be augmented by 10,000 men of the Moscow Militia, without uniforms and armed with pikes.

THE NEGRO PRISONER

were to be found. We reached the point when even the advance guard was unable to procure a guide to tell them place names or give any information about the country; and this resulted in the utmost confusion and difficulty.

At last, about two leagues in front of Ghjat, the advance guard captured a Cossack whose horse had been killed, and shortly afterwards a negro who called himself the cook of the Hetman Platow.¹ This latter fellow was taken as he was leaving a village where he had been pillaging. The King of Naples sent them both to the Emperor, who plied them with questions. Their replies struck me as so odd that they were worth noting.

The negro gave us particulars of the mode of life of his general, upon whom he always waited at table. He thus heard the conversation that went on, and was able to recount the rivalries of some of the generals, who were jealous of one another; but he knew nothing of the army's marching movements. He kept on asking to whom he was talking, before whom he had been brought, at the same time making the most comical grimaces and contortions. He and the Cossack had to be told again and again that it was the Emperor himself who was interrogating them, for neither would believe that it could be the Emperor Napoleon himself marching with the vanguard and so near their Cossack friends, for they could not believe that the Tsar would ever go so near the enemy.

"Platow sometimes comes to the vanguard," said the negro, "but he does not march with them like this; nor does he stay with them. As for the Russian generals, they never go with the Cossacks, nor even with the Russian troops. If the Russians were to be in the van with the Cossacks, the French would not be at the gates of Ghjat, for there are many more Russians and Cossacks than there are French, and the Cossacks are not afraid of the French."

When told once again that it was the Emperor he was

¹ Count Matthew Ivanovitch Platow (August 6, 1757 to January 3, 1818) General of Cavalry and Attaman of the Don Cossacks. Thiers, who was acquainted with this incident, confused the Cossack and the negro, and combined them into a single person, whom he made a "Cossack, gunner in Platow's Corps." (Thiers, XIV, 288.)

speaking to, he bowed, prostrated himself several times, and then began to dance, sing, and make every imaginable contortion. This negro assured the King of Naples, who had no guide, that he knew the entire countryside, and His Majesty asked that the man should be sent back to him, and this was done.

The Emperor then had the Cossack brought before him. He had been kept to one side while the negro was being questioned; he was a man between thirty and thirty-six years of age, dark, five foot high, with quick eyes, an open and intelligent face, a serious air and was apparently much distressed at finding himself a prisoner. He was especially troubled at having lost his horse, his money, and what he called his little package, that is to say the effects he had taken or stolen, which he carried on his saddle and used for padding out his seat. The Emperor told me to give him some gold pieces, and lent him a horse from the stables; this consoled him, and his confidence was soon restored; he then talked as much as was wanted.

Attached to the rear-guard, he had seen nothing of the main army since Smolensk; it had suffered greatly in what he called the battle, that is to say at Smolensk. It would fight another battle in front of Moscow. The Russians complained bitterly of Barclay, who, they said, had prevented them from fighting at Wilna or Smolensk by shutting them up in the town. Kutusoff had reached the army to replace Barclay two days previously. The Cossack had not seen him, but a young staff-officer had come on the previous day to speak to the Cossack officer and had disclosed this news, adding that the nobles had forced the Tsar to make this change, and it was warmly welcomed by the army. This news, which seemed highly probable to the Emperor, afforded him the greatest pleasure, and he repeated it to everyone.

Barclay's temporizing nature was wearing him out. This retreat in which nothing was abandoned, despite the inconceivable activity of the pursuers, gave no hopes of obtaining from such an adversary the result he so much desired.

"This plan of theirs," the Emperor would sometimes re-

mark, "will give me Moscow. But a good battle would finish the war sooner and lead us to peace, and that is where we are bound to finish in the end."

On learning of Kutusoff's arrival, he immediately observed with an air of satisfaction that the Russian general could not have come for the purpose of continuing the retreat. He would certainly give battle; he would as certainly lose it, and deliver Moscow to us, for he was too near the capital to save it. Thanks were due to the Tsar for having made this change at such a moment, which could not have been more propitious. The Emperor commended Marshal Kutusoff on the score of his intelligence, but spoke of his ineptitude at Austerlitz and of his manœuvres there and in Turkey,¹ adding that, with the finest army the Russians had ever had on the Danube, he had not been able to make peace at the gates of Constantinople, or to seize Wallachia. With an enfeebled and demoralized army he would certainly not prevent the French from reaching Moscow. Kutusoff would have to give battle in order to please the nobles, and in a fortnight the Tsar would have neither a capital nor an army. True, this army would have had the honour of not yielding the ancient capital without a struggle, and this was probably the Tsar's intention in making this change in the command, as he could then make peace without incurring the reproaches and censure of the high nobles who had chosen Kutusoff, and upon whom, in consequence, could be imputed the effects of any reverses they might encounter. Undoubtedly, this had been his motive in yielding to his nobles.

The Emperor continued to question the Cossack, whose answers were all given with a note of remarkable intelligence for a private soldier. This is what he said:

"If Alexander's Russian soldiers, especially his generals, were like the Cossacks, you and your Frenchmen would not be in Russia," he told the Emperor. "If Napoleon had had Cossacks in his army he would have been Emperor of China

¹ Michel Hilarionovitch Golemnitchef Kutusoff, Prince Smolenskoi (1745-1813), was in command of the Russian Army at Austerlitz, where he was wounded in the cheek. In 1811 he commanded the same army against the Turks.

long ago. It is the Cossacks who do all the fighting; it is always their turn. While the Russians sleep the Cossacks keep watch. The Cossacks will defend Moscow because of Alexander, who is a good prince, though his ministers and generals are deceiving him. His generals only fight when they have to; they have given up Smolensk the Holy and that is a bad sign. If Moscow is taken and the French enter the Cossack country, Russia is lost. Cossacks are good soldiers; they will have done their duty to the very last, and then they will side with Napoleon. Napoleon is a great general; Alexander is a good Tsar. If he liked, Alexander would be the best general in Russia. Russian generals are too fond of their ease; they sleep too much; they must have cushions and every comfort; they only think of themselves, not of their soldiers' needs. The French fight well, but they do not keep a good look-out. They like to pillage; they slip away from their units to hunt through houses, and the Cossacks profit by this and capture large numbers every day, and recover their booty from them. Had it not been for the Cossacks the French would have been in Moscow, in Petersburg, even in Kazan. It is the Cossacks who hold them up every day. The Cossacks like the King of Naples, who makes a fine show, for he is a brave fellow and always the first to come under fire. Word has gone round that he is not to be killed, but they want to take him prisoner."

He told us that at Wiasma the Cossacks had prepared everything for burning the bridge, the shops and various houses. He said it had been ordered by their commander.

We found Ghjat¹ partly burned and still smoking. They had been caught at work sooner than at Wiasma. Attempts were made to stop the fire. The Emperor made an extended reconnaissance in front of, and all round, the city; he visited the hospital, which lay at the town gate and had not been burned. He hurried on the rebuilding of the bridges and the crossing of the troops. He did not return until very late. Even fewer of the inhabitants had been left in Ghjat than in Wiasma. Houses in the street where the Emperor had his

¹ The Emperor arrived at Ghjat at two o'clock in the afternoon of September 1st.

quarters, and those along the riverside left intact, were full of provisions of all sorts; fine flour, plenty of eggs, and butter, all of which we had long lacked. The Emperor received positive details about the Russian army. Kutusoff had arrived on the 29th, having passed and returned through Ghjat. It was said that Miloradovitch had joined the army with 50,000 men and a large number of guns. The Emperor estimated this reinforcement at no more than 30,000 men.¹ The Russian officers seemed very glad of Kutusoff's arrival, and had no doubt that he would fight a big battle in a few days. The army was continuing its retreat in order to join up with the reinforcements coming out from Moscow.

From these particulars, which confirmed all the Emperor's notions, he no longer doubted that the time had at last come for the battle he so ardently desired. He went over with relish all he had heard, adding the following reflections: "The new general cannot continue this plan of retreat, which is condemned by national opinion. He has been summoned to command the army on condition that he fights; therefore, the system of warfare pursued hitherto must be changed."

These considerations decided the Emperor to prepare likewise for action. He spent the 2nd and 3rd at Ghjat in order to collect his troops and give the cavalry and artillery some rest. His mind was also occupied with the certainty of General Latour-Maubourg reaching Esmakowa with his Division on September 1st.²

Feeling the necessity of restoring some order among the convoys which were blocking the roads, and so giving the artillery a chance of getting to the front in readiness for the battle which he deemed imminent, the Emperor gave orders that all vehicles³ in front of the convoys of material should be burned. "I will even have my own carriage burned," he said to me next day, "if it is out of its proper place."

¹ Miloradovich had actually no more than 15,000 under his command.

² General de Latour-Maubourg was in command of the 4th Cavalry Corps. On August 24th, had sent him an order to move between Velnia and Dorogobouje in order to take part in the expected battle. (*Correspondance*, 19131.)

³ Order of the day dated September 1, 1812 from the Imperial camp at Ghjat. (*Correspondance*, 19168.)

Proceeding on horseback, the Emperor came across a number of carriages being driven out of the column alongside an artillery train. He made the chasseurs of his bodyguard stop them, and leaping from his horse, ordered the leading one to be burned. Representations were made to him, and M. de Narbonne pointed out that this might possibly mean the stranding of some officer who might lose his leg on the morrow.

"It will cost me much more if I have no artillery to-morrow," answered the Emperor.

Straw and wood had to be fetched to start the fire. While this was going on a calèche was dismantled, and a light trap following was consigned to the same fate. As soon as the fire was lit the Emperor galloped off, and the drivers, I think, salvaged their somewhat singed vehicles.¹

"I wish it had been your carriage," said the Emperor to the Prince of Neuchâtel. "It would look better, and you deserve to lose it, I am always coming across it."

"Behind Your Majesty's carriage," answered the Prince.

"It is Caulaincourt's fault," rejoined the Emperor. "Anyhow, I have promised to burn it if I come upon it. Do not be put out at my threat, for I will show no more mercy to my own carriage than to anyone else's. I am commander-in-chief, and I must set an example."²

On the 4th, headquarters was in bivouac near Prokofewo,³ and on the 5th and 6th near Borodino.⁴ M. de Bausset⁵ arrived during the afternoon of the 6th. He brought letters from the Empress, who had accompanied him as far as Prague on

¹ According to Castellane (*Journal* I, 145), this scene took place on September 3rd, and the carriage burned was that of M. de Narbonne himself. "When His Majesty had gone on," Castellane adds, "this General (Narbonne) came back to his carriage and gave ten louis to the soldiers who had put out the fire which they themselves had lit."

² It is to be observed that Caulaincourt makes no mention of Napoleon's violent rating of Berthier, which took place at Ghjat, and as a result of which the Major-General ceased to take his meals with the Emperor until they reached Mojaïsk. This is related in several contemporary memoirs, notably by Denniée, *Itinéraire*, p. 62.

³ Other witnesses say near the post of Ghridnewo.

⁴ At the bivouac in the middle of a square of the Old Guard.

⁵ Louis François de Bausset was one of the Prefects of the Palace, February 1, 1805.

the way from Dresden, and he was also the bearer of a fine portrait by Gerard¹ of the King of Rome. The Emperor found this portrait hung up in his tent when he returned from a reconnaissance of the enemy posts.² The aide-de-camp of the Duke of Ragusa³ had arrived at the same time with reports of the bad state of affairs in Spain.⁴ The courier from Paris had brought him advance news of this some days previously, but the affairs of Russia were too serious at the moment for him to pay much attention to the Duke of Ragusa's reverses in the Peninsula.

"The English have their hands full there, they cannot leave Spain to go and make trouble for me in France or Germany. That is all that matters," he said to me next day.

The Emperor stayed only a moment in his tent,⁵ which was pitched, as usual, in the middle of the Guards' square, but set off at once towards the attack which our right was making against two redoubts supporting the enemy's left. This attack was carried out with such vigour that we were masters of the forts in less than an hour.⁶ The troops were ordered to remain in position and the infantry in square.

¹ See *Mémoires anecdotiques sur l'intérieur du Palais de Napoléon*, by L. F. J. de Bausset, II, 103.

² This portrait was hung in the Emperor's room throughout his stay at the Kremlin. It was lost during the retreat. Happily Gerard had made several copies of it, and it had also been engraved. On August 25rd, M. Debonnaire de Gif, auditor of the Council of State, had already taken to Napoleon at Smolensk, as a gift from Madame de Montesquiou, a miniature by Mlle Aimée Thibault representing the King of Rome sitting on a sheep. Cf. Frédéric Masson, *Napoléon et son fils*, 230.

³ This aide-de-camp was Captain Charles Fabvier, the future general and hero of the Philhellenic struggles, appointed aide-de-camp (April, 1811) to Marmont, who commanded the army which Massena had brought back from Portugal after an unfortunate campaign. Fabvier was wounded at Arapiles, July 22, 1812. A fortnight later he started from Burgos and arrived at Paris on August 17th. He rejoined the Emperor on the evening of September 6th. Cf. Debidour, *Le General Fabvier*, 58.

⁴ At the beginning of 1812 Marmont was forced to retreat before Wellington, who had taken Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. The Duke of Ragusa had been beaten at Arapiles on July 22, 1812.

⁵ Caulaincourt, who had been relating the events of September 6th here returns to September 5th.

⁶ The attack of the Schwarzdino redoubt by the Compans Division (4th of the 1st Corps). The action, which began at four o'clock in the afternoon, was ended victoriously by five o'clock. This action gave Mérimée the subject for his *Enlèvement de la redoute*, in *Mosaïque*, 1822.

This was a wise act of foresight on the part of the Emperor, because half an hour after dusk, and long after the action had taken place, Russian cuirassiers supported by infantry charged on our squares with great vigour, making for the redoubts, which they certainly hoped to force us to evacuate and allow them to occupy during the confusion of a night attack.¹ The first square, taken unawares, lost its artillery and some men; the others, put on their guard by the firing, held firm, and the Russian cuirassiers, badly mauled by our guns and musket-fire and ill-supported in their attack, were obliged to retire and leave us these redoubts, which were the key of their position. Our troops even gained a little ground when they pursued them in the dark, and we established ourselves at the edge of a wood which it was of the utmost importance for the enemy to retain, if only to delay our attack and afford a post from which to observe our movements.

During the night the Emperor visited our bivouacs, inspected the captured redoubts, and rode several times up and down the line to judge with his own eyes as to the enemy positions and their strength at each point. At the same time he saw his troops, as was his custom on the eve of battle. He had already visited the different corps during the afternoon, and had to some extent held up his final dispositions and orders, being still undecided whether he would not attack on the following morning, so apprehensive was he that the enemy would once again escape him.

At daybreak² the Emperor went once more to the principal redoubt, and under cover of the wood, the whole of which had been occupied during the night, he and the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself approached very close to the enemy position. His Majesty then traversed the whole extent of the line, more particularly the centre and the left, which he reconnoitred as far as the outposts. He returned once again to the centre accompanied by the King of Naples, so that he could explain all his dispositions on the spot. He then visited the extreme right, which was under the command of Prince

¹ Charge of the Douka Cuirassiers against the 111th of the Line.

² September 6, 1812.

Poniatowski, who had fought a brilliant engagement at the head of his Poles on the previous day and had gained much ground.¹ The resistance of the Russians at this point was not what it ought to have been, nor what it had been elsewhere. The Emperor hesitated whether he should make a wide movement on his right to turn the enemy position and partly avoid his redoubts, or whether he should simply take advantage of the two redoubts he had captured, and engage the centre from the front and flank by launching an attack with our right. He was apprehensive lest the first of these plans, which would have threatened the enemy from the rear, would decide the Russians to make another retreat, especially as the loss of the redoubts which had been captured the previous day had greatly weakened their position. These considerations determined him to adopt the latter plan.

Seeing the enemy tranquil in their positions, the Emperor decided to let the army rest during that day, while this would also give him an opportunity of bringing into the line the artillery reserves, and whatever had got slightly to the rear. He also thought—and this last consideration determined him—that the enemy, who had come at nightfall to retake the redoubts essential to the support of their left, would make some efforts during the day to recapture that position, or at least make some efforts to recover the ground gained by the Poles. If they did this, the Emperor hoped for an engagement which would produce exceedingly advantageous results for himself; but the day was spent on both sides in observing one another, except on the part of the Poles, who gained a little more ground, thus allowing us a very advantageous deployment on the enemy's flank for the attack of the morrow. Seeing that the Russians had not stirred, the Emperor came to the conclusion that they had constructed new fieldworks to replace those they had lost the previous day. About three o'clock it was even thought that they were retiring, and the Emperor, who was constantly watching them, was on the point of launching an attack; but a closer inspection from

¹ On the 5th. Poniatowski had supported the attack of Compans by debouching from the wood in time.

places which permitted the movements of the Russians to be better understood, it was ascertained that they were in their same positions. That evening the Emperor returned to his tent.¹

He was at the redoubt on the right before dawn on the 7th,² and, together with the Prince of Eckmühl, Berthier and myself, went to the edge of the wood in front. As soon as daylight came the Emperor's order of the day was read to the troops. It was brief but forcible, like all those written by himself on great occasions.³

The Poles, the King of Naples with his cavalry, who were on the left, and the Prince of Eckmühl's troops, were in motion before daybreak. Their attack was impetuous, and the defence stubborn. Prince Bagration, facing them, resisted vigorously and tenaciously, but our troops were so full of enthusiasm that nothing could stop them. General Compans, who was wounded in these first attacks,⁴ was replaced by General Rapp, who shared a like fate at the head of the same brave fellows.⁵ Generals who were killed or wounded were replaced without the least sensation being caused, without the action being in the least delayed, even when the Prince of Eckmühl was himself hit.⁶

¹ Pitched on the heights opposite Borodino.

² September 7th, the day of the battle of the Moskowa, the Emperor was in the saddle at three in the morning.

³ *Correspondance*, 19182. At the imperial camp on the heights of Borodino, September 7th, two o'clock in the morning.

⁴ Jean Dominique Compans, born at Salies-du-Salat (Haute Garonne), June 26, 1769; died at Blagnac (Haute Garonne), November 10, 1845. He was General of Division from November 23, 1806. In 1812 he commanded the 5th Division of the 1st Corps (Davout). On September 7th the Compans division was placed at the extreme right of the French line, at the head of Davout's corps and attacked the advance points that covered the enemy's left. At half-past seven Compans was wounded with a musket shot that struck his right shoulder. Cf. *Le Général Compans*, by Ternaux-Compans, 184.

⁵ When he heard that Compans had been wounded, Napoleon sent his aide-de-camp, General Rapp, to take command of his division. Within an hour Rapp was wounded four times, first by two gun shots, then by a bullet in the left arm which ripped away the cloth of his sleeve, his tunic and his shirt to the skin, then by a musket shot which wounded his left hip and threw him off his horse. He was then replaced in his command by General Desaix. (*Mémoires de Rapp*, 206.)

⁶ Some moments after the 57th had pierced the right wing Marshal Davout had his horse killed under him. He fell to the ground and lost consciousness. When he came to, although suffering severely, he desired to remain in command of his army corps.

Marshal Ney overwhelmed and broke up the advance corps of the centre with his usual boldness. At seven o'clock there was at this point a cannonade and a roar of musket-fire such as has not often been heard. In the meanwhile the King of Naples backed up with his cavalry the impetuous attack of the infantry on the right and the Prince of Eckmühl's corps, and the two remaining fieldworks of the Russians on their left were taken.

At eight o'clock the Emperor was informed that Montbrun,¹ General of Division and commanding the 1st Cavalry Corps, composed of three divisions, had been killed. He recalled my brother,² whom he had sent to the attack on the right and who came up a moment later to announce the taking of the two redoubts and the subsequent successes.

"Go and take command of the 1st Cavalry Corps," the Emperor said to him. "Do as you did at Arzobispo."³

The Prince of Neuchâtel sent him a written order for the Generals of Division to see. My brother seized my hand, saying, "Things have become so hot that I don't suppose I shall see you again. We will win, or I shall get myself killed."

His chronic sufferings often made him desire death; did they now conjure up in him this mournful presentiment? Or was it possibly the heat of the action? I do not know, but I could not rid my mind of this ominous farewell until an even more fatal event occurred to confirm the foreboding which had overtaken me.

Supported by one of the Viceroy's corps, Marshal Ney was

¹ Louis Pierre Montbrun, born at Florensac March 1, 1770, had been promoted General of Division on March 9, 1809. He did not command the 1st Cavalry Corps, as Caulaincourt says, but the 2nd, Reserve Cavalry Corps, which had been under his orders since January 9, 1812. During the cavalry charge led by Ney and Murat at the right of the line on September 7th, Montbrun was fatally wounded by a bullet.

² General Auguste de Caulaincourt, as was mentioned above, was aide-de-camp to the Emperor and Commandant of Imperial Headquarters.

³ Auguste de Caulaincourt had been promoted General of Division on September 7, 1809, as a reward for his brilliant services during the passage of the Tagus by the united corps of Soult, Mortier and Ney. "On the 8th (August, 1809) Marshal Mortier, having ordered the dragoons of the 5th and 2nd Corps under the command of General de Caulaincourt to wade across the river, captured the fortified bridge of Arzobispo in brilliant style and dispersed all the forces that the Duke of Albuquerque had mustered to oppose the passage of the river and the occupation of the left bank." (*Guerre d'Espagne, Extraits des souvenirs inédits du Général Jomini*, by Ferdinand Lecomte, 110. Cf. *Moniteur* of September 28, 1809.)

backing up the right, and by ten o'clock the enemy had lost all the ground in front of their great centre redoubt. They had consequently lost the position on the left and the village that supported their centre;¹ but their reserves were coming up. For a moment success hovered between the two sides towards our right, and we even had to draw in our advance troops to the main body while falling back on the captured redoubts.

A formidable array of guns spat forth death in every direction; the Russian infantry made fresh efforts to regain their lost ground. Their chief redoubt belched out a veritable hell on our centre. In vain did Marshal Ney and the Viceroy combine their forces to attack it; they were repulsed. Returning to the attack a second time, they were no more fortunate, and Ney even lost a little ground. A section of the Guard, who had followed by echelons the movement of the corps which united the centre to the right, took up a position from which, if necessary, they could support this corps if the momentary forced retirement should become more serious. But our artillery checked the dash of the enemy, who for a long time stood firm under the fire of a devastating bombardment. Finally they were forced to yield the ground which we had previously taken from them.

All this time the Emperor was watching the movements of the centre; he had stationed himself opposite the last redoubt we had taken, and he gave a general order to halt for the moment and hold the positions we occupied until the artillery had had time to demolish, as he said, those masses of infantry which stood so motionless. It was then nearly eleven o'clock. Shortly before this Lieutenant-General Belitchef² and some fifteen prisoners taken in the redoubt were brought to him. The officer in charge of them told the Emperor that they had put up a gallant defence. The Emperor received the General well. Seeing his prisoner without his sword, Napoleon expressed his regret that he had been disarmed.

¹ Borodino.

² Caulaincourt has confused the names, for the Russian General made prisoner in the redoubt was Likatcheff, who, although a very elderly man, commanded a Russian division.

"I respect the courage of the unfortunate too much, sir," he said, "not to give myself the pleasure of returning his arms to a brave man."

With that he handed the General his sword, and asked him some questions. He then gave orders that the other prisoners should be questioned, taken care of, and treated, as the General had been, with the utmost respect.

This capture gave the Emperor great pleasure, but it was inconceivable to him how it was that so few prisoners had been taken, when these redoubts had been captured in such a rush and entirely surrounded by the King of Naples's cavalry. He complained bitterly, and asked a great number of questions about it, not concealing the fact that he had desired and hoped for other results.

"We shall win the battle," he said. "The Russians will be crushed, but it will not be conclusive if I do not take prisoners."

He showed signs of anxiety. Between noon and one o'clock the Emperor ordered the Viceroy to resume the offensive and support the left of Marshal Ney, who was already supporting General Junot. The right, reinforced by the Young Guard, likewise had orders to push forward. The enemy, smashed by the guns, and pressed simultaneously on all points, massed their troops and held firm despite the ravages made in their ranks by the guns. The Emperor then climbed into the redoubt to follow with his own eyes and direct the general movement he had ordered all along the line. Our troops redoubled their efforts without gaining ground. The fire increased to greater intensity; we were at grips at all points. It was at this moment that my brother, having put in motion two of his divisions supported by two battalions of infantry, placed himself at the head of the 5th Cuirassiers to lead the troops under his command on the great redoubt and thus ensure the success of this attack, already attempted in vain several times. He drove out the enemy,¹ and from that

¹ "Nevertheless a cavalry corps dashes out on the left. Montbrun is no longer at their head; a cannon ball has wounded him. It is Anguste de Caulaincourt who leads them. They increase their gallop, pass the great redoubt in the centre, close in beyond it and soon disappear in a cloud of dust and smoke. Suddenly

moment the battle was won, as the Emperor himself said, for the Russians at once began a general retreat. I think it was about three o'clock when an aide-de-camp arrived in hot haste to tell the Emperor that the great redoubt had been taken by my brother and that the enemy was retiring at all points. An instant later M. Wolbert, my unfortunate brother's aide-de-camp, who had not quitted his side, brought the Emperor the details of this affair, and told him that my brother had been killed by a bullet below the heart just as he was coming out of the redoubt to pursue the enemy, who had rallied at some distance and were advancing to retake it. I was at the Emperor's side when this report was brought.¹ I need not attempt to describe my feelings.

the bayonets of Prince Eugène glitter on the farther side of the redoubt. Assailed on all sides, the volcano thunders, flashes, vomits torrents of fire, that are redoubled and then suddenly extinguished. General Likatcheff has tendered his sword, but his soldiers fight to the death. Woeful doggedness! Auguste Caulaincourt and Lanabère, their conquerors, are at grips with them in the redoubt itself. The cuirassiers have made their way in by the ravine at the same moment that Eugène's men are scaling the parapets." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813*, II, 35.)

¹ Writing of those events, Ségur says: "Messengers were hastened to inform the Emperor of this victory and this loss. The Master of the Horse, brother of the unfortunate General, heard the news. At first he was overcome, but he soon steeled himself in face of this misfortune, and save for the tears that rolled silently down his cheeks, he appeared impassive. The Emperor said, "You have heard the news; would you like to retire?" He accompanied these words with an exclamation of sympathy. But at that moment we were advancing against the enemy. The Master of the Horse made no reply; he did not retire, he merely lifted his hat slightly as a token of his gratitude and refusal." (De Ségur, *Histoire de Napoléon et de la Grande Armée*, I, 401.) In his *Mémoires* (205) Rapp adds the following detail: "A soldier hidden in an embrasure laid him out. He slept the sleep of the brave." Castellane (*Journal*, I, 150) confirms Ségur's account: "His brother, the Duke of Vicenza, learned the news in a cruel manner. He was at the Emperor's side; and an aide-de-camp came up sobbing, to announce the death of his General. The Emperor turned round and said to the Duke of Vicenza, 'You have heard the sad news; go to my tent.' The Master of the Horse remained in the saddle." François Georges Louis Wolbert, born May 10, 1774, at Chatenois (Bas-Rhin) adjutant in the train of the Army of the Rhine from June 1, 1793, to October 16, 1794, *émigré* and sentenced to death by default, was admitted as non-commissioned officer in the Viomenil Regiment, December 12, 1794, and became *chasseur noble* (12th company) March 1, 1796. On September 8, 1800, he was purged of his default, entered the 19th Dragoons, 18 Brumaire Year X, was made corporal on 22 Pluviose, sergeant-major 5 Germinal, regimental sergeant-major 18 Fructidor, second lieutenant March 3, 1807, lieutenant in December, 1811, aide-de-camp to Caulaincourt in April, 1812, first lieutenant in the Guards Dragoons September 23, 1812, retired on half-pay September 1, 1814, cavalry captain January 20, 1815, captain commandant in the gendarmerie of the Rhone May 9, 1815, retired commandant in the gendarmerie of the Rhone

"He has died as a brave man should," said the Emperor, "and that is, in deciding the battle. France loses one of her best officers."

His Majesty immediately set off at a gallop in front of the cavalry to join the King of Naples and make such dispositions as he considered necessary to assure and follow up this success. Marshal Ney and the Viceroy had supported the decisive movement of General Caulaincourt. The enemy's attack in order to retake the great redoubt was in vain, and the Russians were forced to retreat along the whole of their front.

One redoubt still remained to them as well as a small fieldwork that commanded the Moscow road, and it seemed as though they wished to hold them. A thin wood covered their march and concealed their movements from us at this point. The Emperor flattered himself that the Russians were going to hasten their retreat, and he reckoned on hurling his cavalry on them in an attempt to break them. The Young Guard and the Poles were already on the march towards these outworks which the Russians kept. In order to make out their movements the Emperor went with the sharpshooters. Bullets whistled around him; but he had made his escort stay behind. Seeing me at his side the Emperor told me to go back.

"It is over," he said. "Go and wait for me at headquarters."

I thanked him but remained with him. The Emperor was certainly running a great risk, as the fusillade became so lively that the King of Naples and several Generals hurried up to urge him to retire.

The Emperor then went in front of the columns that were coming up. The Old Guard followed them; the carabineers and the cavalry marched in echelon. The Emperor seemed determined to carry these last Russian fieldworks, but the Prince of Neuchâtel and the King of Naples pointed out to him that the troops were marching thither without any commander, that nearly all the divisions in the army had likewise been

May 9, 1815, retired from the active list February 9, 1816, captain in the Garde de Paris September 6, 1830 (with seniority from October 25, 1815), major September 19, 1832, retirement gazetted August 14, 1835. (*Archives administratives de la Guerre*, general classification.)

deprived of their commanding officers through death or wounds, that the regiments of cavalry and infantry were, as he could see, greatly reduced in strength. They added that it was growing late, and that though the enemy were certainly retreating, they were doing so in good order and showing an inclination to dispute every inch of the ground tenaciously, whatever the havoc wrought by our guns in their ranks. They also urged that the only chance of success was to use the Old Guard for the attack, and that in the existing circumstances success at such a price would really be a check, while failure would be a reverse that would counterbalance the entire success of the battle. Finally they urged him not to engage the only corps in the whole army which remained intact and ought to be kept so for future occasions.¹ The Emperor hesitated; then he went forward once more to observe for himself the enemy's movements.

Meanwhile the King of Naples and the Prince of Neuchâtel had, in different directions, reached the walls of these redoubts. They rejoined the Emperor, whom they assured that the Russians were in position and, far from retreating, several corps were massing, with the bearing of men determined to retreat no longer. All the successive reports represented our losses as very considerable. The Emperor came to a decision. He suspended the order for an attack and contented himself with sending up supports for the corps still engaged, in case the enemy should wish to attempt something fresh, which was not likely as their own losses were also immense. Night-fall put an end to the fighting. Both sides were so weary that in several places firing ceased without orders having been given. At night the Emperor established his headquarters at the spot where he had taken up his stand at the beginning of the battle, on this side of the redoubts.

¹ It would be superfluous to emphasize the importance of Caulaincourt's testimony on the subject of the intervention and opinion of Berthier and Murat. The Emperor's hesitation at this juncture surprised all observers, but historians have attributed it either to the state of Napoleon's health, which will be considered farther on, or to the impression created in his mind by the hecatomb of the battlefield. It is clear that Berthier and Murat themselves considered it useless and dangerous to order the intervention of the Guard, which was the only corps left intact to enable the Emperor to consolidate his victory.

Never had a battle cost so many Generals and officers.¹ Success was hardly won, and the fire was so murderous that Generals, like their subordinate officers, had to pay in their persons for their victory. We did all we could for the wounded whilst the battle was raging and during the night that followed, but most of the houses in the vicinity of the battlefield had been burned during the day, and in consequence many casualty stations passed the night in the open. There were very few prisoners. The Russians showed the utmost tenacity; their fieldworks and the ground they were forced to yield were given up without disorder. Their ranks did not break; pounded by the artillery, sabred by the cavalry, forced back at the bayonet-point by our infantry, their somewhat immobile masses met death bravely, and only gave way slowly before the fury of our attacks. Never had ground been attacked with more fury and skill, or more stubbornly defended. Several times the Emperor repeated that it was quite inexplicable to him that redoubts and positions so audaciously captured and so doggedly defended should yield us so few prisoners. Several times he asked the officers who came with reports of our successes, where were the prisoners who ought to have been captured? He even sent orderlies to the various positions to make sure that no more had been taken. These successes, yielding neither prisoners nor trophies, made him discontented. Several times he said to the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself:

"These Russians let themselves be killed like automatons; they are not taken alive. This does not help us at all. These citadels should be demolished with cannon."

That night the enemy was seen plainly to be starting to retreat. Orders were given for the army to follow their movements. At dawn on the following day² there were only Cossacks in sight, and they were two leagues away from the

¹ The Generals who were killed were Montbrun, Caulaincourt, Damas, Lepel, Compère, Huard de Saint-Aubin, Marion, Romeuf, Breuning, Tharreau, Lanabère, Plauzonne (Noël Charavay, *Les Généraux morts pour la Patrie*, 88). "The returns I compiled from reports sent to the Major-General by the Chiefs of Staff of the different army corps . . . showed 49 general officers killed and wounded." (Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 80.)

² September 8th.

battlefield. The enemy had taken with them the great part of their wounded and we had only the few prisoners I have mentioned, twelve guns from the redoubt captured by my unfortunate brother, and three or four other pieces taken in the line by our troops during their first attack.

From early morning the Emperor was out in all parts of the battlefield, supervising with the utmost care the collection and removal of the wounded, Russian as well as French. Never was a battlefield so thickly strewn with dead. In the village round which the attack had centred,¹ the Russian dead lay in heaps. On the plateau behind it the ground was covered with the corpses of Litowski's and Ismaelowski's Guards, slaughtered by our guns. The Emperor carefully examined every portion of this battlefield, the positions of each corps, the movements they had made, the difficulties they had had to overcome. At each point he demanded minute details of everything that had happened, dealt out praise and encouragement, and was greeted by his troops with all their wonted enthusiasm.

I must record one incident which went to prove the cost of this bloody action to the French Army. Arriving at the second redoubt just when it was about to be taken, the Emperor noticed some sixty or eighty men, with four or five officers, remaining stationary on the battlefield in pursuance of orders received from their commanding officer. Astonished to find these men standing still when the rest of the troops had gone ahead, he asked the officer in charge why he was there.

"I have been ordered to stay here," was the answer.

"Rejoin your regiment," said the Emperor.

"It is here," replied the officer, pointing to the approaches and ditches before the redoubt.²

¹ Borodino.

² This anecdote is narrated with some variations by Ségur, *Histoire de Napoléon I*, 352, who dates it on September 6th, the day after the capture of the Schwardino redoubt by the Compans division, and he attributes it to the colonel of the 61st Infantry Regiment of the line. It had already been told by Labaume (*Rélation*, 131), who gives the same date. But the truth of the story has been contested by Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 205), who bases his criticism on the fact that the Schwardino redoubt was not taken by assault but was abandoned by the Russians. By dating it September 7th Caulaincourt makes the story seem more probable.

Not understanding his meaning, the Emperor asked again:

"I want to know where your regiment is. You must join up with it."

"It is here!" replied the officer, pointing to the same spots, and betraying his annoyance at the Emperor's failure to understand.

At that moment a young officer standing near this old campaigner came forward and explained to the Emperor that the regiment, being unable to capture the redoubt at the first attack, had dashed forward with such fury, and met with such a well-directed fusillade, that this detachment was all that remained of two battalions, the rest having all been killed or wounded, as he could see for himself. Indeed, from the colonel downward, all those brave fellows lay scattered round the redoubt, on the parapet, or in the places which they had penetrated but had been unable to hold in the first attack.

The Emperor examined in detail all the works thrown up by the Russians. I cannot describe my feelings as I passed over the ground which had been dyed by my brother's blood.¹ If the eulogies and the justice rendered by an entire army to the memory of a brave man could have consoled me, I ought to have had peace in my heart.

After completing his reconnaissance the Emperor galloped off to the advance-guard. According to reports which he had received that morning from the King of Naples,² there were none but Cossacks to be seen. A very small number of stragglers were rounded up; the enemy had not abandoned so much as a cart. The King reckoned on passing Mojaïsk, and made the Emperor agree to establishing headquarters there that evening; but when he arrived before the town he found it strongly held by enemy infantry and a large body of cavalry. A late start had been made, and the day was declining. Not

¹ "We followed in the train [of the Emperor] into this great redoubt, which had been captured at the price of so much blood and so many noble victims. Two of our party, yielding to a very natural grief, did not follow Napoleon: M. de Caulaincourt and M. de Canouville. With tears in their eyes they turned away from the spot that contained the glorious remains of their brothers." (Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 115.)

² Murat had been marching since morning on Mojaïsk with two divisions of cuirassiers, several divisions of light cavalry, and one division of infantry.

being able to reconnoitre the position, we were obliged to come to a halt. The Emperor established himself in the village in front of Mojaïsk;¹ the enemy evacuated the town during the night, our troops entering on the following day as dawn was breaking.² The Emperor went into the town towards noon. He was very much preoccupied, for the state of affairs in Spain were weighing him down just when those of Russia, in spite of this victorious battle, were far from satisfactory. The state of the various corps which he had seen was deplorable. All were sadly reduced in strength. His victory had cost him dear. When he had come to a halt on the previous evening he had felt convinced that this bloody battle, fought with an enemy who had abandoned nothing in their retreat, would have no result beyond allowing him to gain further ground. The prospect of entering Moscow still enticed him, however, but even that success would be inconclusive so long as the Russian Army remained unbroken. Everyone noticed that the Emperor was very thoughtful and worried, although he frequently repeated:

"Peace lies in Moscow. When the great nobles of Russia see us masters of the capital, they will think twice about fighting on. If I liberated the serfs it would smash all those great fortunes. The battle will open the eyes of my brother Alexander, and the capture of Moscow will open the eyes of his nobles."

These bold words of the Emperor were apparently uttered for the purpose of shaping opinion and distracting attention from the losses which he had sustained, rather than as an expression of his true convictions. Indeed, in his interviews with the Prince of Neuchâtel, the only person to whom he had spoken at length since the battle, he seemed very serious, and, from what the Prince told me, he kept repeating that a large number of men had been killed to no real purpose. No prisoners, no booty—that was what chiefly vexed the Emperor,

¹ This village, called Ukarino according to our itinerary (but named Starokowno by Denniée), was a league from Mojaïsk and had been burned. (Denniée, *Itinéraire* 83.)

² The Friant division entered Mojaïsk at seven o'clock on the morning of September 9th.

and formed the constant burden of his complaints. Knowing that the enemy was to be reinforced by recruits, and by militia corps that had not yet been able to join the army, he flattered himself that Kutusoff would offer battle once more before surrendering the capital, and that he would do so with a better grace as we would have a sword in one hand and peace proposals in the other.

According to the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Emperor was at that moment so eager to accept those terms, or to enter into negotiations, that he would even have hesitated to go beyond Mojaisk, were it not that he hoped and wished that the treaty should be signed at a place which would give some indication of his victory. At other times he definitely wanted to proceed to Moscow, stay there a week, and then retire on Smolensk. However, not admitting for a moment that the enemy would yield the capital without another battle, and having therefore no doubt that they would try to save the place by putting up a show of defending it at the same time as they opened negotiations, the Emperor only once entertained the hypothesis that he would have to enter the place by force of arms. He was persuaded that the indisputable fact of his advance would lead, if not to the preliminaries of peace, at least to a sort of armistice which would quickly bring it about.

"Swords have been crossed; honour is satisfied in the eyes of the world; and the Russians have suffered so much harm that there is no other satisfaction that I can ask of them. They will be no more anxious for me to pay them a second visit than I shall be to return to Borodino," said he.

I must confess that I found some difficulty in persuading myself that, even in his obvious interests, the Emperor could then have contemplated a halt without entering Moscow, when he was now so near that city. The Prince and I recalled our conversations at Witepsk and other places, and also those which we had had with the Emperor, and he told me that if we had been going to start on again the Emperor would not have got so near Moscow; that he would have announced his pacific intentions openly; and that if proposals for peace had come they would have been promptly accepted. He added

that the Emperor would like to withdraw but only with honour.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was by no means blind to the possible consequences of this advance. My unfortunate brother's death had but served to increase our common forebodings. But the Emperor's frame of mind was only the effect of momentary embarrassment, and was changed as soon as these embarrassments ceased or some petty success had been gained. The bad state of affairs in Spain, the appalling results of our last battle, all tended to preserve that attitude of moderation which the Emperor then displayed. As for ourselves, we were perfectly agreed that there was no way of finishing this war except by quitting Moscow (provided the enemy yielded it to us) forty-eight hours after entering it and returning to Witepsk.

The Emperor remained at Mojaïsk on the 11th and 12th.¹ He was unwell,² preoccupied, and saw no one except such of his Marshals who passed through. None of us had access to him. The town had not been burned, but very few of the inhabitants remained. The Emperor persuaded himself that the Russians had given up their systematic arson and destruction, and from this immediately began to draw good auguries for the future. He was confirmed in his idea that a settlement would be reached. The Russians continued their retreat with the same good order, taking their wounded with them, and not leaving as much as a nail behind. The Emperor spent these two days in organizing the hospitals as best he could and most of the wounded were conveyed to these.

We had few resources, as I have said, but the devotion of the hospital staff and their unflagging zeal, which was sup-

¹ Arriving at Mojaïsk on the 9th, the Emperor stayed in the square on the first floor of a house that was being built. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 45.)

² He was suffering from a complete loss of voice, which made him unable to speak or dictate. Besides this, Ségur (*Histoire et Mémoires*, VI, 14) says that Napoleon had been taken with an attack of bladder trouble on the 4th, and could not be relieved until after the arrival in Moscow. In support of this he produces certificates signed by Yvan, the Emperor's surgeon, and Mestivier, his physician. Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 250) denies this indisposition and writes that "Napoleon was in his usual health, working with his customary zest, and tiring out several horses." In fact, on the day of the battle of the Moskowa, according to the *Itinéraire*, he rode three horses, Lutzelberg, Emir and Courtois.

LACK OF SURGICAL SUPPLIES

ported by all branches of the administration, accomplished more than it had been possible to hope for in the circumstances.¹ Many of the wounded, nevertheless, were left for some time on the battlefield in wretched sheds. The survivors suffered extreme privations through the scarcity of all necessities, as can easily be understood if we recall the state of our ambulances when we reached Witepsk.

Still on the march, our plight could not be improved, whatever steps had been taken. The Emperor had given explicit orders to the War Office that surgeons should be sent and a large supply of hospital necessities, for he eventually decided to authorize the outlay which the ministry had required and which he had hoped to save by calling upon the resources of the country as he had done on his other campaigns.²

A certain number of surgeons had been sent, but the supplies which we so grievously lacked had not arrived, nor could they come so quickly, since the road beyond the Niemen offered no means of transport. Mojaïsk was nothing but a vast hospital. Generals, officers, privates, all arrived there seeking the help which none could give. Detachments were sent out into the neighbouring country to procure food and cattle.

The army continued its movement until the 11th. Marshal Ney, in command of the advance guard, was five leagues from Mojaïsk along the road to Moscow, and the King a little further on. This retreat produced only a few prisoners. The Emperor had halted to give the troops some rest, and to carry out the necessary reorganization in case there should be a second battle. On the 13th, when the whole army was again on the move, the Emperor halted all the columns. Our cavalry were so exhausted that they could not push their reconnaissance to any distance, and at the moment we knew so little of the enemy's movements that, doubtful as to the direction taken by Kutusoff, of whom there was no news, the Emperor judged it advisable to pause. He had not received any reports from

¹ Cf. *Chirurgie militaire*, by Baron Larrey, IV, 49.

² The Emperor had written again to Lacuée in this sense from Ghjat, September 3rd. (*Correspondance*, 19178.)

Prince Poniatowski on our right, and was for a moment uneasy about him, since he felt that the Russians might have taken advantage of our rest to hurl themselves on that side, and threaten our flank and rear in the hope of stopping, or at least delaying, our entry into Moscow until they had received replies from Petersburg. Napoleon still inferred that the enemy desired to propose a settlement whilst they also offered battle.

Officers were sent out one after another in all directions. The King of Naples was ordered to push forward a strong reconnoissance along the Kaluga road. At last the Emperor was reassured, and the army resumed its march. He was delighted to learn that the enemy, encumbered with wounded and baggage, were taking the Moscow road, where, according to various reports, outworks¹ had been thrown up in preparation for a second battle. When evening came, however, the Emperor abandoned his idea on hearing that his advance-guard was so near that great city that it was likely that the whole Russian Army would be disbanded and totally disorganized. Nevertheless, he could not explain this movement of the whole army upon Moscow, as it did not offer battle.

On the 12th, headquarters were moved to Zarewo.² On the 13th they were at the fine manor-house of Wezianino, which the King of Naples had occupied on the previous day with the advance-guard.³ The Prince of Neuchâtel told me that the Emperor was amazed at the King of Naples receiving no proposal from the enemy, who had done nothing to put themselves in an attitude of defence notwithstanding their reinforcement by the militia and recruits. From that he

¹ Kutusoff had placed himself at the very gates of Moscow, his right at Fili, on the Moskowa, his left on the heights of Worobiewo.

² Schuermans says at Petelina, near Preobrajenskoie and Tatarski, in a modest country-house.

³ Near the village of Borowska, between Nikolskoe and Malo-Wiasma. This house belonged to Prince Galitzin and was situated at the side of a lake. "It was the first really fine château, with extensive outbuildings, the first real château that we had seen since we entered Russia. The soldiers of the advance-guard had damaged it somewhat, as was their custom; they had cut the upholstery." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 155.) The *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt* says: "The 13th. The Emperor left by carriage at noon. He arrived at half-past one at Malo-Wiasma."

inferred, and he repeated it more than once, that the Russian Army had lost far more heavily at the Moskowa than had been supposed, and that it would be in no position to continue the campaign this year. Since the battle the Emperor had spoken to scarcely one of his entourage; he seemed to be in continual anxiety.

At ten o'clock on the morning of the 14th, the Emperor was on the last height overlooking Moscow, called Sparrow Hill, when he received a note from the King of Naples informing him that the enemy had evacuated the city and that a Russian staff officer had been sent to him with a flag of truce to ask for a suspension of hostilities while the troops were crossing the city.¹ The Emperor agreed to this, but ordered the King to follow the Russians step by step, to press them as far as possible as soon as they should be outside the barriers. He likewise enjoined him not to enter the city, but to go round it if possible. He instructed the King to send him as soon as he could a deputation of the city authorities, who were to meet him at the city gate. Shortly afterwards he ordered General Durosnel, whom he had appointed governor, to enter the city with as many gendarmes as he could muster to establish order and take possession of the public buildings. He urged him particularly to maintain order, to guard the Kremlin, and to keep him supplied with information. The General was especially enjoined to hasten the deputation of city authorities which the King of Naples was to collect. This, the Emperor said, would give the inhabitants of the town the best possible guarantee for their tranquillity.

Not imagining for a moment that this deputation would fail to appear, or that he would receive no news, which was natural enough considering the distance to be covered, the Emperor reached the barrier of the moat at noon and dismounted. His impatience increased with every moment.

¹ "We counted on resistance; instead of that, at four kilometres from Moscow a flag of truce came to commend the wounded to the care of the King of Naples, and to ask that there should be no firing on the town, which was full of drunken Russian soldiers." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 154.) See also Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 84. This flag of truce had been sent by Miloradovich, commanding Mutisoff's rear-guard.

Every instant he sent out fresh officers, and continually asked whether the deputation or any notables were coming. At last reports came from the King and General Durosnel. Far from having found any of the civic authorities, they had not discovered so much as a single prominent inhabitant. All had fled. Moscow was a deserted city, where no one could be found but a few wretches of the lowest classes.

CHAPTER IV

MOSCOW

WHILE waiting for information the Emperor had spent his time in reconnoitring, in various directions, the hills which commanded Moscow on that side. When he returned to the gate of the city he ordered me to write to the Arch-Chancellor in Paris and to the Duke of Bassano at Wilna, informing them that we were at Moscow, and dating my letter from that city. He placed pickets to prevent any soldier from entering the place, but there were so many gaps in the walls that this precaution was of little avail. In the town itself a few shots were exchanged with armed peasants, stragglers from the Russian Army and Cossacks who were met with everywhere. The prisoners thus taken were sent to the Duke of Eckmühl's Corps, which had taken up its position before the city. Officers of the King of Naples's staff, and others from general headquarters, sent to gather information, hastened in one after another, confirming the particulars already received.

Step by step the King of Naples followed the retreat of the enemy's rear-guard,¹ and the Russian officer in command could not speak highly enough of his bravery, though he blamed His Majesty's temerity. "Such is our admiration of you," he said, "that our Cossacks have passed word round that no one is to fire a shot at so brave a prince. However, one of these days," he added, "you will meet with misfortune." He bade the King take all advantage of this fine courage. In the exchange of such compliments a certain amount of time was gained, and they were dispensed all the more lavishly as the King seemed to welcome them. Wishing to make some gift to so courteous a foe, His Majesty asked his staff if one of them

¹ Murat entered Moscow at midnight, September 14, 1812.

could not lend him some piece of jewellery. M. Gourgaud, the orderly officer who was attached to him in order to carry out the Emperor's scheme of liaison, offered his repeater, which the King hastened to present to the Cossack officer.¹

Almost the entire city having been occupied, Count Durosnel and M. Gourgaud, who had joined the King and accompanied him throughout, left him to go to the Palace and the Arsenal, where M. Gourgaud took sixty Cossack prisoners.²

As was the case in most of the private palaces, nothing had been disturbed in the Kremlin; even the clocks were still going, as though the rightful owners were in occupation. A few Russian stragglers caused some disorder; men were constantly being caught, but the gendarmes at M. Durosnel's disposal were quite insufficient to cope with them, so he confined his attention to the Kremlin and the Foundling Hospital, which he kept intact.³ He asked the Emperor for more troops, informing him that all the houses were full of stragglers and deserters, and that he could not think of entering the city until a number of the houses had been

¹ "When they reached the neighbourhood of the Kremlin this handful of men found some Cossacks of the rear-guard on their heels, and with his accustomed temerity the King of Naples engaged them in some sort of skirmish. Eventually a truce was called. The King was pleased when Cossacks of all hues crowded round him to stare at the elegant embroidery of his uniform and the beautiful plumes in his Polish cap. The popularity that he enjoys with this warlike people dates from Tilsit, where he put himself on the footing of a dispenser of gifts, a role which he continues to play. He gave his watch to the Cossack chieftain; he borrowed Gourgaud's watch and all the jewellery and trinkets of his suite to distribute among his barbarian admirers." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 52.) "It happened that the watch was a very fine piece of jewellery that Gourgaud had himself received from an illustrious hand." (Dennicé, *Itinéraire*, 87.) Murat's liberality "was not at the expense of the fine fellows in his suite; they subsequently received presents of far greater value than the objects they had lent him." (Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 115.)

² "Gourgaud, the orderly officer, with the intention of obtaining information, took an interpreter and went towards the Palace, at the gates of which large groups of men were to be seen. But this was an unfortunate move, for he had advanced but a few paces when he was greeted by shots from a band of wretched convicts, whose audacity was soon quenched by a couple of guns." (Dennicé, *Itinéraire*, 87.)

³ Napoleon "first looked at the great edifice of the Foundling Hospital. When he learned that this establishment was under the particular patronage of the Tsar's mother he gave orders that a guard should be placed there at once to ensure its safety." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 55.)

searched and a proper system of patrols established in every quarter, in view of the great size of the city. The Emperor instructed him to apply to the Duke of Treviso, whose corps was to occupy the town; but the Duke's forces were greatly reduced in strength, and as he did not see the need of scattering his men so soon, and at nightfall withal, he sent only a meagre and insufficient number to Durosnel. As I have already said, the better-to-do inhabitants had fled; all the authorities had left the place, which was entirely deserted. There was no possibility, even, of getting together any kind of administrative service. No one remained but a few *outchitets* (French tutors), a few foreign shopkeepers, the servants in some of the hotels, and for the rest, people of the lowest classes of society.

It would be difficult to describe the impression made on the Emperor by this news. Never have I seen him so deeply impressed. He was already greatly disturbed, and impatient at having had to wait for two hours at the city gate, and this report undoubtedly plunged him into the gravest reflections. His face, normally so impassive, showed instantly and unmistakably the mark of his bitter disappointment.

Count Durosnel, to whom he had given the command of the city, busied himself zealously in re-establishing order. He had kept the Emperor acquainted with all the information that reached him, and this completely confirmed what had already been transmitted to him. M. Rostopchin, the Governor of Moscow, had only left the city at eleven o'clock that same morning, after having dispatched the officials, the administrative effects, and the population. A very small number of householders and some thousand or so of people of the lowest classes had stayed behind, only because they did not belong to overlords, and because their position prevented them from knowing where to go. Most of the houses were as deserted as the streets. The Governor had kept from the inhabitants any news of the loss of the battle of the Moskowa, and had even said nothing about the projected evacuation of the town until the last moment. Only a small portion of the archives and valuables could be taken away. Some arms remained in the arsenal, and a few soldiers and militia were hidden in the

houses; these men were armed and the militia were little better than savages. Durosnel accordingly urged the Emperor once again not to enter the city yet, especially as the difficulty of making oneself understood and even of finding guides or obtaining intelligent information required considerable time.

All these reports made the Emperor still more anxious. After pacing up and down in front of the gate for some time, he mounted his charger, rejoined the Prince of Eckmühl, who was a short distance away, and we all went with him to the village near the town.¹ The Emperor also reconnoitred the environs to a considerable distance. He enjoined the Prince of Eckmühl to see to it that no prisoner could make his escape. The Prince of Neuchâtel, who was present, observed to me "that the marshal was certain to obey these orders exactly, for he had already anticipated them by giving orders to his men to fire on any of the prisoners handed over to him after the battle in the event of their trying to make their escape."

The Emperor retraced his steps, crossed the suburb,² and went as far as the partly demolished bridge; the river was only a couple of feet deep, and we were able to ford it. The Emperor went as far as the street on the opposite bank, then turned on his tracks to hasten the repairs to the bridge, so that the munitions might cross. He questioned some of the inhabitants, who knew nothing of what had happened in the town, and were even unaware of the Russian retreat until the actual moment of evacuation, on the day of our arrival.

The Emperor stayed near the bridge all night, his headquarters being established in a mean tavern built of wood at the entrance to the suburb.³ The King of Naples, who was in pursuit of the enemy, sent word to the Emperor that numerous stragglers were being caught, that they all said the army was

¹ Davout was entrusted with keeping the Smolensk road.

² The suburb of Drogomilow, separated from the city by the river Moskowa. See the plan of Moscow in 1812 in the Marquis de Chambray's *Histoire de l'Expédition de Russie*, III, Atlas.

³ "During the afternoon Napoleon himself passed the barrier, went some yards forward and took up his provisional quarters in a large inn on the right-hand side." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 54.) Bausset (*Mémoires*, II, 115) says: "in a fine wooden house." The *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt* says: "The

being disbanded, that the Cossacks openly declared that they would fight no more, and that the army was heading for Kasan. He confirmed what had been learned in the city, that Kutusoff had kept silence as to the loss of the battle and the retreat on Moscow until the previous day, and that the authorities and inhabitants of the city had taken to flight that same evening, and even on the day of our arrival. He told us that the governor, Rostopchin, had not heard of the loss of the battle until forty-eight hours before our entry into Moscow; that up to that moment Marshal Kutusoff had talked of nothing but success, of his skilful manœuvring and the damage he had done to the French. The King of Naples confidently expected to seize part of the enemy convoys, and felt certain of being able to break up their rear-guard, so completely disheartened did he believe the Russians to be. He repeated these particulars in all his despatches, and likewise insisted on the discontent of the Cossacks, whom he declared to be on the point of quitting the Russian Army.

All these details delighted the Emperor and restored his cheerfulness. He had not received any proposals at the gates of Moscow, but the actual state of the Russian Army, its discouragement, the discontent of the Cossacks, the impression certain to be caused in Petersburg by the news of the occupation of the second capital of Russia, all the happenings which Kutusoff had doubtlessly concealed from the Tsar just as he had kept them from the Governor Rostopchin¹—all these things, said the Emperor, must surely lead to peace proposals. He made no comment on Kutusoff's march on Kasan.

About eleven o'clock in the evening news came that the Bazaar² was on fire. The Duke of Treviso and Count Durosnel

14th. The Emperor left by carriage at eight in the morning, mounted *Emir* at seven versts from Moscow, arrived at half-past three at the gates of Moscow: 15 versts. Entered the suburb at five o'clock. Lodged in a little wooden house at the entry of the city."

¹ On the day after the battle of Moskowa, Kutusoff wrote to Alexander to the effect that if he had left the battlefield it was not because he was defeated, but in order that he might get the start and cover Moscow.

² The Bazaar was a great square in the *Kisaya-gorod*, or Chinese town to the north-west of the Kremlin. It was surrounded by a brick arcade on which opened a number of small shops.

went to the spot, but in the darkness it was impossible to cope with this conflagration, for there was nothing at hand, and no one knew where to find pumps and hoses. The inhabitants and soldiers pillaged such shops as they had time to enter.

During the night there were two small outbreaks of fire in the suburbs situated at some distance from that where the Emperor was quartered; but they were attributed to carelessness in lighting the camp-fires, and orders were given to redouble vigilance. These accidents having no immediate sequel, little importance was attached to them. The Guard was ordered to furnish sentry-posts for the various points. The Duke of Treviso and M. Durosnel, who were constantly in the saddle, did all they could to ensure the tranquillity of the vast city. Finding himself without sufficient means to maintain order, Durosnel came in person to report to the Emperor in the morning, and suggested that the command of the city should be entrusted to the Duke of Treviso,¹ whose troops were occupying the place and who had at his hand all the means of carrying out the requisite steps. The Emperor approved this proposal, and Count Durosnel himself delivered to the Duke his orders to make himself responsible for the government of Moscow.²

The Emperor went to the Kremlin at noon.³ A gloomy silence reigned throughout the deserted city. During the whole of our long route we did not meet one single person. The army took up its positions round the town, and some corps were billeted in the barracks. At three o'clock the Emperor mounted his horse, made a tour of the Kremlin and the Foundling Hospital, went to see the two principal bridges, and

¹ Marshal Mortier commanded the Young Guard, quartered in and around the Kremlin.

² The Duke of Treviso was to take over "the senior command of the city" at noon, September 16th. (Berthier to Mortier, September 16th. *Vide* Chuquet, *La Guerre en Russie*, 79.)

³ September 15th. The *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt* says: "The 15th. Mounted Emir at six in the morning to go to the Kremlin Palace." Denniée (*Itinéraire*, 90) says eight o'clock. Schuermann (*Itinéraire générale de Napoléon I*, Paris, 1908, 308) follows Rembowski and Domergue in saying seven o'clock. The time of noon given by Caulaincourt in the *Mémoires* is further contradicted by Gourgaud, who says six o'clock. (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 273.)

then returned to the Kremlin, where he had installed himself in the apartments of Tsar Alexander.

It was not until then that we learned of Kutusoff's proclamation to his army on the eve of the battle.

Various reports said that Kutusoff and Rostopchin had met to discuss affairs on the day before the evacuation; Rostopchin was said to have proposed the destruction of the city, but Kutusoff had been opposed to this step, and had been so indignant at the suggestion, and at the other measures desired by the Governor that he had gone away in a rage. From other details it seemed that these two personages, who disliked each other, rarely met, that Kutusoff had left Rostopchin as ignorant as he had left the Tsar up to the very last moment, for in Moscow as in Petersburg, a *Te Deum* had been sung for the supposed victory of the Russian arms.¹ We heard that the first convoy of wounded arrived on the 12th; that on the 13th rumours of a defeat began to spread, though they were discounted; that even on that day and the following day some of the city militia were sent out to join the main army; in short, even persons in authority were totally in the dark as to what had happened until the day before our entry. The Emperor was also given full particulars of a fire balloon, upon which an Englishman or a Dutchman named Smidt had been working in secret for some time. This balloon, we were told, was to destroy the French army, overwhelming it with confusion and destruction.² This same man had also manufactured numerous fuses and inflammable materials, and the

¹ On September 15th Kutusoff had summoned a council of war, in the course of which it had been decided to abandon Moscow; but Rostopchin does not seem to have been invited to this council.

² "Through information obtained from Russian prisoners, and from the reports of foreigners settled in Moscow we know that firebrands and incendiary preparations had been manufactured some time previously by a chemist who was said to be a German but who, in the end, was found to be actually an Englishman. This person, denounced by a number of workmen, had for long been concealed in the Woronozowo, a short distance from Moscow, under the protection of Rostopchin, the Governor. To reassure public opinion it was given out officially that an enormous balloon was being made, that could carry fifty persons, and would be loaded with combustible materials destined to be discharged on Napoleon's tent; and the good folks of Moscow believed it." (Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 116.) "Some six weeks earlier a sort of arsenal had been established in Prince Repnin's country-house, about six versts from the city, where fireworks were

systematic manufacture of most of these incendiary objects, found in the various houses in preparation for setting light to them, was notable.

Much of the information we received was contradictory, and proved that those who had left the city had not confided their intentions to those who remained, even at the very last. An aged French actress repeated so widely a conversation she was supposed to have had with a certain General Borozdine,¹ that the Emperor expressed a wish to see her. According to the General or to this actress, the disaffection towards the Tsar and the popular dislike of the war for Poland had reached such extreme lengths that the Russian nobility, threatened with the loss of their property and the greater part of their fortune, were anxious for peace at any price and would force the Emperor Alexander to come to terms. Kutusoff had deceived the Court at Petersburg even as he had deceived the public and the Governor of Moscow. Everyone imagined that he had been victorious. The precipitate evacuation of the city would ruin the Russian nobility and force the government to sue for peace. The nobles were enraged with Kutusoff and Rostopchin for having lulled them into a false sense of security.

At eight o'clock in the evening flames broke out in one of the suburbs. Assistance was sent, without more attention being paid to the matter, for it was still attributed to the carelessness of the troops.

The Emperor retired early; everyone was fatigued and as anxious to rest as he was. At half-past ten my valet, an energetic fellow who had been in my service during my embassy to Petersburg, woke me up with the news that for three-quarters of an hour the city had been in flames. I had only to open my eyes to realize that this was so, for the fire

being made. . . . A bulletin issued by the Governor-General had previously announced that a great balloon was being prepared by means of which the entire enemy army was to be infallibly destroyed." (*Moscou pendant l'incendie. Journal du curé de Saint-Louis des Français* (Surugue, published by the Abbé Rebours, 1891.) Cf. A. de B—ch (Beauchamp), *Histoire de la destruction de Moscou*, Paris, 49.

¹ Nicholas Milhailovitch Borozdine, born in 1777, served in the Horse Guards, of which he became Colonel. He was aide-de-camp to the Tsar (1805), and in 1825 commanded the 4th Reserve Corps. He was promoted General of Cavalry; he died at St. Petersburg, November 14, 1830.

was spreading with such fierceness that it was light enough to read in the middle of my room. I sprang from bed and sent to wake the Grand Marshal (Duroc) while I dressed. As the fire was spreading in the quarters farthest away from the Kremlin, we decided to send word to the Governor of the city, to put the Guard under arms, and to let the Emperor sleep a little longer, as he had been extremely tired during the past few days. I mounted my horse hurriedly to go and see what was happening and gather what assistance I could muster, and to make sure that the men connected with my own department, scattered throughout the city as they were, were running no hazards. A stiff wind was blowing from the north, from the direction of the two points of conflagration that we could see, and was driving the flames towards the centre, which made the blaze extraordinarily powerful. About half-past twelve¹ a third fire broke out a little to the west, and shortly afterwards a fourth, in another quarter, in each case in the direction of the wind, which had veered slightly towards the west. About four o'clock in the morning the conflagration was so widespread that we judged it necessary to wake the Emperor, who at once sent more officers to find out what was actually happening and discover whence these fires could be starting.

The troops were under arms; the few remaining inhabitants were flying from their houses and gathering in the churches; there was nothing to be heard but lamentation. Search had been made for the fire-engines since the previous day, but some of them had been taken away and the rest put out of action. From different houses officers and soldiers brought *boutechnicks* (street constables) and *moujiks* (peasants) who had been taken in the act of firing inflammable material into houses for the purpose of burning them down. The Poles reported that they had already caught some incendiaries and shot them, and they added, moreover, that from these men and from other inhabitants they had extracted the information that orders had been given by the governor of the city and the police that the whole city should be burned during the night.

¹ September 16th.

It was impossible to believe these details; the arrested men were put under guard, and fresh search and increased watchfulness were instituted; pickets had already been sent to those quarters of the town which were not already in flames; and the further particulars which continued to arrive confirmed our gravest suspicions.

The Emperor was deeply concerned. At first he attributed the fire to disorders among the troops and the state in which the inhabitants had abandoned their dwellings. He could not persuade himself, as he said at Ghjat, that the Russians would deliberately burn their houses to prevent our sleeping in them. At the same time he made serious reflections on the possible consequences of these events for the army with regard to the resources of which they would deprive us. He could not believe that it was the result of a firm resolution and a great voluntary sacrifice. But the successive reports left no further doubt, and he renewed his orders to take every possible measure to stop the disaster and discover those who were carrying out these cruel measures.

Towards half-past nine he left the courtyard of the Kremlin on foot, just when two more incendiaries caught in the act were being brought in. They were in police uniform. Interrogated in the presence of the Emperor they repeated their declarations: that they had received the order from their commanding officer to burn everything, that houses had been designated for this end, that in the different quarters everything had been prepared for burning in accordance with orders from the Governor Rostopchin, as they had heard. The police officers had spread their men in small detachments in various quarters, and the order to put their instructions into action had been given in the evening of the previous day and confirmed by one of their officers on the following morning. They were reluctant to give the name of this officer, but at last one of them ended by declaring that the man concerned was a minor non-commissioned officer. They could not, or would not, indicate where he was at the moment, nor where he was to be found. Their replies were translated to the Emperor in

THE FIRE

the presence of his suite. Many other depositions confirmed unmistakably what they said. All the incendiaries were kept under observation, some were brought to judgment and eight or ten executed.

The conflagration invariably spread from the extremities of the districts where it originated. It had already reached the houses around the Kremlin. The wind, which had veered slightly to the west, fanned the flames to a terrifying extent and carried enormous sparks to a distance, where they fell like a fiery deluge hundreds of yards away, setting fire to more houses and preventing the most intrepid from remaining in the neighbourhood. The air was so hot, and the pine-wood sparks were so numerous, that the beams supporting the iron plates which formed the roof of the arsenal all caught fire. The roof of the Kremlin kitchen was only saved by the men placed there with brooms and buckets to gather up the glowing fragments and moisten the beams.¹ Only by super-human efforts was the fire in the Arsenal² extinguished. The Emperor was there himself; his presence inspired the Guard³ to every exertion.

I hastened to the Court stables, where some of the Emperor's horses were stabled and the coronation coaches of the Tsar were kept. The utmost zeal, and, I may add, the greatest courage on the part of the coachmen and grooms, were necessary to save the place; they clambered on to the

¹ Only a divine inspiration could save us. This it was which led a company of Grenadiers posted in this spot (the Lubyanka) to seize buckets and pour water on the roofs of such houses as were most exposed to danger; and this with such promptness that they averted the attacks of the flames. This proved the salvation of the entire district, which was the only one left intact." (Letter from the Abbé Surugue, curé de Saint-Louis at Moscow, quoted by Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 87.)

² "By noon the fire had enveloped the Palace stables and one tower contiguous to the Arsenal; sparks even fell in the courtyard of the Arsenal, on a pile of tow that had been used in the Russian ammunition wagons. The wagons of our own artillery were standing there. The danger was immense, and the Emperor was informed. He went to the spot." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 91.)

³ "The gunners and soldiers of the Guard, apprehensive at seeing Napoleon expose himself to such great danger, only added to it by their eagerness; General Lariboisière begged the Emperor to go away, pointing out to him that his presence was making the gunners lose their heads." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 91.)

roof, and knocked off the fallen cinders, whilst others worked two fire-engines which I had had put in order during the night, as they had been totally dismantled. I may say without exaggeration that we were working beneath a vault of fire. With these men's help I was able to save the beautiful Galitzin Palace and the two adjoining houses, which were already in flames. The Emperor's men were ably assisted by Prince Galitzin's servants, who displayed the utmost devotion to their master. Everyone did his best to further the measures we took to check this devouring torrent of flame, but the air was charged with fire; we breathed nothing but smoke, and the stoutest lungs felt the strain after a time. The bridge to the south of the Kremlin was so heated by the fire and the sparks falling on it that it kept bursting into flames, although the Guard, and the Sappers in particular, made it a point of honour to preserve it. I stayed with some generals of the Guard and aides-de-camp of the Emperor, and we were forced to lend a hand and stay in the midst of this deluge of fire in order to spur on these half-roasted men. It was impossible to stay more than a moment in one spot; the fur on the Grenadiers' caps was singed.

The fire made such progress that the whole of the northern and the greater part of the western quarter, by which we had entered, were burned, together with the splendid playhouse and all the larger buildings. One breathed in a sea of fire, and the westerly wind continued to blow. The flames spread continuously; it was impossible to predict where or when they would stop, as there was no means of staying them. The conflagration passed beyond the Kremlin; it seemed that the river would surely save all the district lying to the east.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, while the fire was still raging, the Emperor began to think that this great catastrophe might be connected with some movement of the enemy,¹ though the frequent reports from the King of Naples assured

¹ According to Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 278), Napoleon's decision was taken after Berthier had made this remark: "Sire, if the enemy attacks the army corps outside Moscow, Your Majesty has no means of communicating with them."

His Majesty that the Russians were pushing forward their retreat along the Kasan road. Napoleon therefore gave orders to leave the city, and forbade anything to be left within its walls. Headquarters were established at the Petrowskoie Palace, on the Petersburg road, a country mansion where the Tsars were accustomed to take up residence before making their solemn entry into Moscow for their coronation. It was impossible to proceed thither by the direct road on account of the fire and the wind; one had to cross the western part of the town as best one could, through ruins, cinders, flames even, if one wanted to reach the outskirts.¹ Night had already fallen when we got there, and we spent the following day in the Palace.

Meanwhile the fire continued with renewed violence, but a part of the quarter between the Kremlin and Petrowskoie, where headquarters and the Guard were billeted, was saved. The Emperor was deep in thought, he spoke to no one, and only went out for half an hour to inspect the interior and exterior of the mansion.² During his stay at Petrowskoie he received no one but the Prince of Neuchâtel, who profited by the occasion, and took advantage of the reflections induced by the fire, to urge His Majesty not to undertake a long sojourn

¹ Denniée (*Itinéraire*, 95) thus describes the Emperor's departure: "The Emperor gave orders for the departure. He slowly came down the stairs of the tower of Ivan (whence he had watched the fire) followed by the Prince of Neuchâtel and other of his officers. Leaning on the arm of the Duke of Vicenza, he crossed a little wooden bridge which led to the Quay of the Moskowa. There he found his horses." Ségur (*Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 52) says that: "After some gropings a small gate was found which opened on to the Moskowa" and he continues with a dramatic recital of the dangers to which Napoleon was exposed on the way. Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 278) contradicts Ségur's account and says that: "The Emperor left by one of the great doors of the Kremlin, accompanied by his officers, in the same manner as he had arrived, and did not go out across the rocks. He descended on to the Moskowa quay, where he mounted his horse. One of the policemen of Moscow walked in front of him, serving as guide. For some time they followed the river and entered the districts where the wooden buildings had been completely destroyed." According to the *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt*: "The 16th September. At half-past five in the evening the Emperor left the palace of the Kremlin on foot by the gate on the river-side, mounted *Tauris* at the stone bridge, took the road for Mojaïsk in the midst of the fire, re-crossed the river at a league from the city in order to reach the Palace of Petrowskoie. Arrived at half-past seven. To bed."

² "Very fine, surrounded by high brick walls flanked by towers in the Greek style, it has truly a very romantic appearance." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 155.)

at Moscow. At sight of this cruel spectacle who would not have felt forebodings of further disaster?

The existence of inflammable fuses, all made in the same fashion and placed in different public and private buildings, is a fact of which I, as well as many others, had personal evidence. I have seen these fuses on the spot, and several were taken to the Emperor. They were also found in the quarter by which he entered the city, and even in the Imperial bedroom in the Kremlin. M. Durosnel, the Duke of Treviso, Count Dumas, and many others observed them on their entrance, but paid no further attention, for they were far from thinking that the Governor and the Government had any ambition, as the Emperor said, to go down to posterity as a modern Erostratus.

The examination of the police rank and file, and the admissions of the police-officer who was caught on the day we entered the city, all proved that the fire had been prepared, ordered, and executed by order of Count Rostopchin. This police-officer, whom M. Lelorgne¹ discovered in the city while looking for the deputation always expected by His Majesty, was a simpleton who knew all that was afoot and was very candid in all his avowals, as was proved by many reports. He supplied details as to the preparations of this fire which left no further doubt as to the Governor's orders, and in time shed the fullest light on the matter.

Of the various incendiaries who were brought to judgment some were executed and others left in prison, hapless victims of their obedience to their superiors and the orders of a madman, as the Emperor said.² The police-officer who at first was compelled to furnish M. Lelorgne with full information, became so terrified that he appeared to be slightly deranged. Such at least was the impression left by his

¹ Elisabeth-Louis François Lelorgne, Baron d'Ideville, born in Paris, October 4, 1780; died Paris, May 30, 1852. Auditor of the Council of State, attached to the office of foreign relations and specially charged with foreign statistics, he had been appointed Secretary-Interpreter attached to the person of the Emperor, July 31, 1812. He had previously lived in Moscow and knew that city intimately. He was the father of Henry d'Ideville.

² Napoleon decreed the creation of military commissions formed by the corps quartered in each district to judge summarily, shoot or hang the incendiaries caught red-handed.

statements. His revelations seemed to be the delusions of a demented man, and at the time no heed was paid to them. This unfortunate fellow kicked his heels for some time in the custody of the guard, where he was left when no longer needed. After the outbreak of the fire his first statements were recalled. It was also remembered that when he had seen the first small fire break out, which was attributed to some camp-fires having been lit too near the wooden houses of the quarter, he had announced that before long there would be many other outbreaks; and when the main conflagration started he exclaimed that the whole city would be burned, orders having been issued to that effect. In fact, all that we had imputed to a disordered mind actually came to pass, so he was questioned anew. To what he had already told us he now added, in confirmation of what several other incendiaries had informed us, that on the day before Governor Rostopchin's departure, several police officers were summoned to a particular locality which he designated (other depositions confirmed this), where they received orders to prepare for burning the city; that they had been instructed to be ready to carry out this order as soon as they had the word; and that subsequently the chiefs of police appointed on every occasion a new rendezvous where their subordinates were to make their reports. On the day when their instructions were to be carried into effect, each senior officer received the order at a time which he indicated, and transmitted it to his subordinates in his district, for them to carry out. The fire-engines had been taken away by the firemen, and those that they had not been able to harness up had been deliberately put out of action and removed.

Before entering Moscow, the Emperor had intended not to take up his residence in the city. The fire, and the consequent destruction of part of the supplies, seemed likely to make him follow this first impulse. The natural conclusion that the Russians would not have sacrificed their capital if they had been at all inclined to sue for peace was likewise calculated to clear the situation. These reflections, combined with many other points brought to his attention by the few persons to whom he spoke

of affairs, and certainly shared by him, seemed to confirm his intentions for a time during our stay at Petrowskoie, and even during the first moments of his return to the Kremlin. In fact everything was ready for withdrawal, and for a time the Prince of Neuchâtel imagined that this would be carried out. But the successive reports from the King of Naples as to the discouragement of the Russian Army, and despatches in which he drew pictures of the results which he hoped and promised from this cause, soon made the Emperor modify these arrangements. The King always saw the Russian Army in flight along the Kasan road, the men deserting, disbanding in troops, the Cossacks ready to leave the army, some even disposed to make common cause with the victorious French.

The Cossack chieftains overwhelmed the King of Naples with continual flattery, and he never ceased to give them tokens of his munificence. The vanguard had no need to fight; the Cossack officers took instructions from the King as to the direction in which he wished to march, and where he desired to establish his headquarters. From the moment his outposts arrived they were practically taken care of, to see that nothing went amiss. No beguilements were neglected to gratify the King, and these marks of deference delighted him greatly. This made the Emperor place less faith in his despatches; the Cossack cajoleries were suspect to his eyes. He saw that the King was being duped, and told him to distrust Kutusoff's pretended march on Kasan. The Emperor could not fathom this movement of the enemy. This affection of regard for the King, and exaggerated accounts of the enemy's discouragement and the discontent of the Cossacks, appeared to him as proofs of underhand work. Although such circumstances would normally have delighted him, he saw them only as blinds to deceive the King as to what was really afoot, or baits to draw him into some trap.

On September 18th the Emperor returned to the Kremlin.¹

¹ The Emperor left Petrowskoie on September 18th, according to the *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt*: "The 17th. The Emperor did not ride to-day. The 18th. The Emperor at 9 a.m. mounted *Moscou*, crossed the town, came to the Kremlin, mounted *Varsovie*, rode about that portion of the city to

DISORDER AND EXCESS

His departure from Moscow had been the signal for an outbreak of grave disorder. Such houses as had been saved from the fire were pillaged; such unfortunate inhabitants as had remained were ill-treated. Shops and cellars were forced open, and thence followed the train of excess and crime inevitably resulting from the drunkenness of soldiers heedless of the voice of their superiors. The city rabble, taking advantage of this disorder, shared in the pillage and led the troops to the cellars and vaults and anywhere else that they thought might have been used to conceal property, in the hope of sharing the pillage. Those army corps not actually in the city sent in detachments to secure their portion of the victuals and booty. The result of this systematic search can be guessed. All kinds of supplies and plenty of wine and brandy were found. The grain and fodder warehouses along the quays had escaped the fire, and the army horses had been so short of provender between Smolensk and Ghjat, and from the battle until we reached Moscow, that everyone hastened to forage for them, and during the two days of the 15th and 16th got enough hay to last several months. Part of these provisions were consumed in the houses as they were found, and to the surplus we owed the abundance with which we lived until our departure from the city,¹ and even enough to keep the men and horses during part of the retreat.

As soon as he returned to Moscow the Emperor began to busy himself with clearing the French Army in the eyes of Petersburg from the odium of having caused the fire, which they had done their utmost to extinguish and from which self-interest alone was sufficient to exonerate them. He instructed M. Lelorgne to find some Russian to whom all the details of the affair could be confided and who would repeat

the right of the theatre, came to the stone bridge, went out by the right of Kolomna, followed the outside moat of the city, passed before the two large military hospitals, the yellow palace. Returned to the Kremlin at four o'clock in the afternoon." The Marquis de Chambray (*Histoire de l'Expédition de Russie*, II, 191) is clearly mistaken when he fixes September 20th as the date of the Emperor's return to Moscow.

¹ Larrey estimates that the provisions found in Moscow were sufficient to feed the whole army for six months. (*Chirurgie militaire*, IV.)

what he was told in the proper quarters. M. Toutolmine,¹ head of the Foundling Hospital, had stayed courageously, like a good father, at the head of this establishment, although most of the foundlings had been evacuated;² and he seemed all the more suitable to undertake the Emperor's charge in that his position as head of one of the Dowager Empress's institutions would enhance the authority of his report in the eyes of the upper and lower classes in Petersburg. He appeared before Napoleon, and M. Lelorgne undertook the duties of interpreter. The Russian was profuse in his gratitude for the help and protection accorded to his establishment. The Emperor assured him that he had undertaken this war from purely political motives and from no spirit of animosity; that peace was his primary aim as he had explained on more than one occasion: that he had been forced to come to Moscow in spite of himself; that he had done everything at Moscow, as elsewhere, to maintain order, and had done his best to extinguish the conflagration started by the Russians themselves.

In his letter to Petersburg, M. Toutolmine³ praised the measures taken by the Emperor and his care for the city, as also M. Lelorgne's unremitting attention and thoughtfulness for the Russians, which had not been relaxed for one moment, as I can myself bear witness. As soon as M. Toutolmine's letters were ready he was given a passport and every facility for enabling one of his employees to bear them to Petersburg.

With the exception of the King of Naples's corps, the entire army was in the town, or quartered close at hand. Inhabitants who had suffered from the fire had found refuge in churches, cemeteries, or wherever they felt secure from the vexation of the troops. The churches, being for the most part on public squares and completely detached buildings, had to a great extent escaped the ravages of the flames. Many of

¹ Ivan Akinfievitch Toutolmine, born December 27, 1752, died December 17, 1815, and buried at Moscow in the Donski Monastery. He was a councillor of state and held the rank of Major-General.

² All the children over twelve had been evacuated to Kasan. Cf. Grand Duke Nicolas Mikhailovitch, *Portraits Russes*, IV, 139.

³ Caulaincourt means to say: "In the letter to the Emperor's mother that he wrote, after this conversation."

these unfortunate refugees had made their way to Petrowskoie, where everything possible was done for them. I housed some two dozen of them in the Galitzin mansion, and among the number was M. Zagriaski,¹ Master of the Horse to the Tsar, who had hoped, by remaining in Moscow, to save his house, the care of his whole life. There was also a Major-General, German by birth, who had gone into retirement in Moscow after long service with the Empress Catherine. These unhappy men had lost everything; nothing remained to them but the greatcoats which they wore.

Our return to Moscow was no less gloomy than our departure. I cannot relate all that I had suffered since the death of my brother. The sight of these recent events broke me down completely; the horror of all that was going on around us added to my grief at his loss. Although one cannot feel one's personal troubles exclusively in the midst of so many public disasters, one is none the less grieved by them. I was overwhelmed. Happy are they who never saw that dire spectacle, that picture of destruction!

A great portion of the city was reduced to ashes; the northern district, nearest the Kremlin, had been saved by the wind shifting to the west; some isolated districts to windward had not suffered at all. The splendid mansions all round the city had escaped the plans for their destruction; only that of M. Rostopchin, the Governor, had been burned to the ground by its proprietor, who had posted up a notice of his intention, doubtless very patriotic in his own eyes, on the signpost that indicated the road from his lands to Worozowo, a short distance from Moscow. This notice was brought to the Emperor, who turned the whole thing to ridicule. He talked a lot about it and sent it to Paris where it doubtlessly produced, as it had in the army, an impression quite contrary to what he expected. It had a profound effect on every thinking man, and this sacrifice of his own house, irrespective of what others did, gained the Governor more admirers than critics. This is

¹ Nicholas Alexandrovitch Zagriaski (1745-1821), entered the service in 1754 in the Ismailowski regiment. He was chamberlain to Paul I, grand cup-bearer and gentleman of the chamber.

how the notice was worded: "For eight years I have improved this land, and I have lived happily here in the bosom of my family. To the number of one thousand seven hundred and twenty the dwellers on my estate are leaving it at your approach, while, for my part, I am setting fire to my mansion rather than let it be sullied by your presence. Frenchmen, in Moscow I have abandoned to you my two residences, with furniture worth half a million roubles! Here you will find only ashes!"

Some days after the return to Moscow, the Emperor announced openly that he had resolved to take up his winter quarters at Moscow, which, even in its present state, would furnish him with better quarters and more supplies than any other place. He therefore put the Kremlin and the various monasteries and convents round the city into a state of defence, and ordered various reconnaissances in the neighbourhood so as to establish a defensive system for the winter.

The Emperor took many other measures of anticipation. He announced that he was ordering fresh levies of men in France and Poland; that he was preparing the organization of the Polish Cossacks, "for which orders have already been issued," he said. Reserves had instructions to join us, and all the reinforcing detachments, which had been echeloned in their advance, were detailed to safeguard our rear, protect convoys, and keep open communications. The post-houses were fortified; the courier service which I had organized at the start of the campaign was given special attention. The trunk bearing despatches for the Emperor and his headquarters arrived regularly every day from Paris in fifteen—often fourteen—days. This service was carried out by postillions relayed from post to post between Paris and Erfurt; from Erfurt to Poland by couriers stationed in brigades of four at every thirty leagues; in part of Poland by relays of postillions, across the frontier and through Russia by French postillions whom Count Lavalette¹ had selected himself, mounted on the best post-horses, and placed at my service. There were four to every relay, and each relay from five to

¹ Lavalette was Director-General of the Posts of the Empire.

seven leagues. The punctuality with which this service was carried out was truly astonishing.¹

The Emperor was always impatient for the arrival of his courier; he noticed the delay of a few hours, and even grew anxious, though this service had never suffered any breakdown. The Paris portfolio, the packets from Warsaw and Wilna, were the thermometer of the Emperor's good or bad humour. It was the same with all of us, for everyone's happiness depended on the news from France. Small consignments of wine and other objects arrived. Officers, surgeons and administrative officials also came to join the army. The reports from officers in command of the principal points in our lines of communication were reassuring. It was as easy to travel from Paris to Moscow as from Paris to Marseilles. Yet everyone was loath to resign himself to passing the winter so far from France, whither all eyes and thoughts continually turned. We had been spoiled by the Emperor's previous campaigns, when peace had always been bought with a few months' toil. Except in the Prussian and Polish campaigns, winters had always been spent in France, and recollections of Osterode and Guttstadt, of the snows of Pultusk and Fratznitz,² brought only sombre reflections.

Some, myself among the first, doubted whether the Emperor really had the intention of passing the winter at

¹ The *Archives* of Caulaincourt include some reports from Margarita, Director of Posts to the Emperor. One sees, for example, that the courier who left Paris at 8.15 on the morning of September 28, 1812, arrived at Moscow at one o'clock in the morning of October 14th, having taken fifteen days, sixteen hours, and forty-five minutes on the journey. He had been kept three hours and three-quarters at Wilna while waiting for the despatches of Bassano. The courier who left Paris at 9.5 on the morning of September 29th reached Moscow at 9.25 on the evening of October 15th, having taken sixteen days twelve hours and twenty minutes, with a delay of two hours and ten minutes at Wilna. The courier who left Paris, September 30th, at 8.45 a.m., arrived at Moscow at 4.45 on the morning of October 16th, after fifteen days and twenty hours on the way and a delay of two hours and fifty minutes at Wilna. The courier who left Paris at 8.50 in the morning of October 1st arrived at 5.40 in the morning of October 17th, after fifteen days twenty-one hours and fifty minutes, with a delay of an hour at Wilna. Finally, the courier who started from Paris at 8.35 on the morning of October 2nd arrived in Moscow at 7.35 in the evening of October 17th, having taken fifteen days and eleven hours, with a delay of three and a half hours at Wilna.

² *Campaign of 1806/7.*

Moscow. The immense distance between ourselves and Poland would give the enemy too many opportunities of harassing us; and there seemed a thousand other considerations against the execution of this project. On the other hand, the Emperor busied himself with so many details of the future, discussed it in such positive terms, and seemed to regard it as essential to the success of his enterprise, if peace were not secured before the winter, that the most incredulous among us ended by believing that he intended to carry out his plans. At that time even the Grand Marshal and the Prince of Neuchâtel seemed convinced that we should remain in Moscow. Everyone laid plans accordingly, and collected furniture and all sorts of things abandoned in the city which might be useful for completing domestic arrangements. Wood and forage were collected; in short, everyone acted as though he would certainly have to pass in Moscow the eight months that must elapse before spring.

For my part, I must confess that in the Emperor's affectation in talking of this plan, as well as in the measures he took for carrying it out, I saw only the desire to give a turn to public opinion, to ensure the collection of provisions, and, above all, to support the overtures he had made. Nobody knew of these overtures. M. Toutolmine had kept the secret as faithfully as M. Lelorgne, who had been entrusted with a second attempt. But the Emperor let fall a few words to the Prince of Neuchâtel as to the nature of his overtures.

The Emperor felt certain (as he later admitted) that his advances, made partly to emphasize that the French had no hand in the burning of Moscow and had done all in their power to check its ravages, and partly to prove his readiness to enter into an agreement, would elicit a reply and even proposals for peace. The burning of Moscow had roused serious reflections in his mind, though he did his utmost to banish from his thoughts the implied consequences of such action on the part of the Russians, and the scant hope that the Russian Government was disposed to make peace. He was always eager to believe in his good star, and that Russia, wearied of war, would seize any occasion to bring the struggle

SHALL WE STAY IN MOSCOW?

to an end. He imagined that the sole difficulty lay in the method of opening the matter, for Russia credited him with vast schemes; but he had taken the initiative by proving to the Tsar Alexander that he was open to listen to conditions and this would inevitably lead to proposals from their side. I think, indeed, that the Emperor Napoleon would have been very amenable in the matter of conditions at that moment, for peace was the sole means of withdrawal from this quandary. He made his advances as if actuated by generosity, under the impression that he was outwitting Petersburg as regards his true motives. He tried to make us believe that the fear of his proving too exacting prevented proposals reaching him. In this way he hoped to extricate himself from the embarrassing situation in which he had placed himself. It was in this hope of an imminent peace that he prolonged his unfortunate sojourn at Moscow.

The splendid weather and the mild temperature that continued so late that year helped to mislead him. Perhaps it had also been his intention to make his winter quarters in Russia before his rear should be threatened and attacked. In that case, he said "Moscow was, by its name, a political position; by the number and nature of its still extant buildings and resources, it was a military position preferable to any other, if he remained in Russia."

In his intimate circle the Emperor conversed, acted and issued orders all on the presumption that he was going to stay in Moscow, so that even those most closely in his confidence entertained no doubt on the matter for some time.

Such was our situation ten or twelve days after our arrival, and everybody believed that we were staying in Moscow, up to the moment when our artillery convoys were attacked¹ and our couriers delayed. One of the latter was captured, as well as two boxes of army letters on their way back to France.

Seeing the season so advanced without any preparation having been made for our departure, I myself ended by

¹ On September 22nd, at about 20 kilometres from Moscow, the Cossacks surprised a convoy of artillery wagons returning from Smolensk and escorted by two squadrons, whom they made prisoners. On the 25th the Cossacks took eighty dragoons of the Guard near Malo-Wiasma, at the home of Prince Galitzin.

doubting in the voluntary evacuation of Moscow. To me it seemed impossible that the Emperor should even think of a retreat when the frost set in, especially as no measures had been taken to protect the men nor any steps taken to enable the horses to cross the ice, although some idea of what a Russian winter meant could have been gleaned from what had happened at Osterode and in Poland. The memory of this, besides, furnished an idea of the Emperor's tenacity of purpose.

Every day some discovery was made of shops and cellars where stuffs, cloths and furs were concealed, and everyone purchased what he thought necessary for the winter. This precaution proved to be the salvation of those who took it.

I paid the wages of all those employed in my department and issued orders that all the greatcoats should be lined with fur, or at least given a fur collar sewn on where a larger skin could not be procured. I also gave orders that fur hats and gloves should be made. It was to this foresight at a time when furs were easily obtainable, as well as to the care and energy of M. Gy,¹ who was in charge of the personnel and, having been with me in Petersburg, was acquainted with the Russian climate, that I owed the possibility of being able to ensure the health of those brave and worthy servants of the Emperor who were under my orders.

On my arrival I organized a number of workshops for augmenting the means of transport of biscuits and fodder. I caused the smiths to forge a number of horseshoes suitable for travelling on ice; in a word, I took every possible measure against such difficulties as might be encountered in winter operations, and to these steps I had the satisfaction of attributing my success in transporting my sick and conveying my vehicles as far as Wilna.

As soon as he returned to Moscow the Emperor gave orders for parades to be held in the court of the Kremlin. A cook-house service had been organized and great activity expended on building ovens. The defensive works were pushed forward vigorously, and a portion of the Prince of Eckmühl's corps was quartered in the city. The immense fields of vegetables,

¹ First Groom of the Household.

especially cabbages, surrounding the town were carefully cut; numerous stacks of hay were also brought into the city, and the potato fields within a radius of two or three leagues were cleared. The transport wagons were in constant use. For the Emperor's household I organized a body of men to secure the flour from a mill, as wheat was beginning to be scarce. I had a large supply of biscuits baked, and a considerable number of sledges constructed. In short, I had everything in readiness for either a prolonged sojourn in the city or an immediate departure. Detachments of men beat up the country to collect cattle, which were becoming scarce. A regular distribution of rations had to be organized. The hospitals were well organized; I established one for the household in a wing of the Kremlin. The men were well looked after, thanks to M. Lerminier,¹ Joannes,² and Ribes,³ whose zeal and rare devotion saved the lives of a great number of unfortunate fellows who had been attacked by nervous fevers and were already enfeebled by excessive fatigue.

The overtures for peace which M. Toutolmine had carried as an intermediary to Petersburg were considered there as proof of the state of embarrassment in which they already suspected we were. While they were being discussed the Emperor busied himself, as I have said, with all his wonted

¹ Théodoré Nilamond Lerminier, from 1808 physician to the Emperor, and to the Hôtel-Dieu, Paris, then to the Charité. Born at Abbeville, June 27, 1770; died in June, 1836.

² There does not seem to have been any doctor of this name at imperial headquarters. There was a Doctor Joanneau attached to the 1st Division of the Guard (Delaborde), but we think that Caulaincourt is more probably speaking of Dr. Jouan, assistant surgeon to the Emperor, who accompanied Napoleon into Russia. Guillaume Jouan, born September 21, 1767, at Nuits (Côte d'Or), son of Jean and Guillemette Roy, surgeon of the third class at the ambulance at Meaux from September 15 to December 17, 1792; third-class surgeon in the military hospital of the Invalides, October 12, 1794; seconded from this hospital for employment in the ambulance of Emperor's household in the campaigns from the year 1805 to 1807, and from 1812 to 1815, retired by royal decree June 10, 1835. (*Archives administratives de la Guerre : classement général.*)

³ François Ribes, born September 4, 1765, at Bagnères (Hautes Pyrénées), assistant surgeon at the Hôtel des Invalides, September 24, 1792; surgeon-major to the Army of the Pyrénées, March 28, 1794; surgeon of the third class to the Hôtel des Invalides, May 4, 1795; surgeon of the second class, February 4, 1804, to the Grand Army, June 15, 1812; to the Hôtel des Invalides, December 15, 1813; physician to the Invalides, August 10, 1828; Ribes was surgeon to the Emperor's quarters in Russia.

activity, in reorganizing the various corps, establishing hospitals, and making sure of provisions for the winter. Night and day were one to him. Paris and France were the object of all his thoughts, and couriers were constantly setting off with decrees and decisions dated from Moscow.

The war in Spain once again occupied his attention.¹ All those matters, which our wearisome marches and the pre-occupation preceding and following the military events had necessarily put into the background, now came to the forefront of his thoughts; yet these grave concerns never distracted the Emperor from the great concerns actually keeping him in Moscow.

Accustomed as he was to dictate peace on his arrival at the palaces of the sovereigns whose capitals he had conquered, he was amazed by the silence of his adversary. The more this silence demonstrated the enthusiasm of the enemy and the exasperation of the nation, the more Napoleon was convinced that peace could only be made at Moscow. His moderation ought to conciliate everyone; he had cleared himself of blame for the fire; he had even done all in his power to arrest the disaster. "It is difficult to see," he said, "any special motive for animosity that should prevent us coming to an understanding. Having reached the ancient capital of Russia, it would seem a political defeat to leave it without having signed the preliminaries for peace, however advantageous from a military point of view another position would be." The eyes of Europe were upon him, and a certain success in the spring would be nothing less, to-day, than a reverse in their eyes, and might entail grave consequences.

Thus pressed to bring matters to a finish, rather than place himself in a position on his flanks where he would be faced with a menacing attitude that could only delay even longer the peace which he flattered himself he had won, the Emperor would have made easy terms, for the sake of bringing the struggle to a conclusion; as much for the sake of the army as to show the enemy the dangers they might run.

¹ Wellington entered Madrid, August 12, 1812; and Soult raised the siege of Cadiz on the 25th.

He repeated that his position at Moscow was very disquieting, and even menacing, for Russia, should Kutusoff suffer the slightest reverse. Enlightened, however, by the character that this war had assumed as well as by the enemy's silence, as to the very real dangers of his position, the Emperor was from that moment prepared to evacuate Russia and content himself with obtaining some measures against English commerce to save the honour of his arms. He tried his utmost to achieve his end in appearance, but, embarrassed as to how he should make these sacrifices without offering them at the outset as concessions imposed by necessity, he set great store on opening negotiations that should lead to explanations and, in his opinion, a prompt reconciliation.

He hoped to win over the Emperor Alexander by giving him the means of offering to his nation an arrangement that could only have been reached by his own personal efforts. Imbued with this idea, and dismissing from his mind the unfortunate memory of the steps already taken, Napoleon determined to write directly to the Tsar, and M. Lelorgne was ordered to search the hospitals, or amongst the Russian prisoners, for some senior officer who might be sent to Petersburg. He found the brother of a Russian diplomatic agent in Germany.¹

The Emperor repeated to him exactly what he had said to M. Toutolmine. He put forward the same views on reconciliation and peace, but this officer respectfully expressed his doubts as to the possibility of coming to an understanding so long as the French remained in Moscow. The Emperor paid little heed to his observations at the time, but sent the officer away with his letter, still deluding himself that the silence of Petersburg was to be attributed to what he called their exaggerated pretensions, and that they would eagerly seize the opportunity of profiting by his avowed moderation. It was this fatal belief, this unfortunate hope, that made him

¹ This refers to Alexis Jakowlef, whose brother was Russian Minister at Cassel. On September 2nd he left Moscow with a letter from Napoleon to Alexander, dated the 20th. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19213.) Jakowlef published an account of his interview with Napoleon, reprinted in *La Revue des Etudes Napoléoniennes*, 1931, II, 45.

stay on in Moscow and brave a winter that exacted a greater toll than any plague could have done.

This move was at the time known only to the Prince of Neuchâtel, M. Lelorgne and myself, and remained secret for a long time, as the Emperor desired.

I return now to the King of Naples, who had confidently followed up the Russian Army along the Kasan road. He came to pass a night at Moscow, saw the Emperor, and next day returned to the advance-guard.

While the King was in Moscow the Viceroy, the Princes of Neuchâtel and Eckmühl, and His Majesty happened to be all four with the Emperor; the Emperor raised the question whether it would not be sound policy to march at once to Petersburg.¹ According to the King, the Russians were in full flight, in a state of complete disorder and discouragement, while the Cossacks were ready to leave the army at any moment. Did Napoleon really believe in the possibility of such an expedition? Did he imagine he would have time to carry it out before the hard frosts set in? Did he think the army in a fit state to carry it out? From what he said previously and afterwards to the Prince of Neuchâtel, it was clear to me that he never really entertained this project, impracticable in view of the state of our artillery and cavalry, while Kutusoff was so close to us with a well-organized army and numerous cavalry.²

The Viceroy and the Marshals were less deluded than the King regarding the supposed disorder of the Russians. They dwelt on our army's need of rest, and on the necessity of ensuring as soon as possible good winter quarters for its reorganization.

¹ According to Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 95) Napoleon must have thought of this idea during the night of September 16th-17th, which he passed at Petrowskoie, and mentioned it in the morning. But the plan envisaging the manœuvre on Petersburg, although bearing no date, can only have been dictated subsequently.

² At St. Helena, Napoleon said: "At that time it would have been impossible to have taken a decision of marching on St. Petersburg. The Russian Court feared this and sent the archives and most precious jewels to London. . . . Considering that it was as far from Moscow to St. Petersburg as from Smolensk to St. Petersburg, Napoleon preferred to pass the winter at Smolensk on the borders of Lithuania and march in the spring time on St. Petersburg." (*Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France sous le règne de Napoléon*, VIII, 165.)

The Emperor would have liked to give a turn to the opinion held by the army, to distract it from its losses by persuading it that it was still fit for any undertaking. He would have liked to disperse the echoes from Petersburg which lingered in Moscow, and was anxious to know what was in the minds of the intelligent men in the army. There was no further question of this project and we stayed in Moscow. But the Emperor had been struck by the King of Naples's observations and evinced great pleasure in repeating what he said, what he had written, and what he kept on writing several times a day as soon as he was back with the advance-guard: namely, that the Russians were completely discouraged, that even the officers cursed Poland and the Poles, that nobody troubled about that country at Petersburg, that the senior officers themselves announced openly that they wanted and requested peace; and that this desire was so loudly proclaimed even in the ranks that the Emperor Alexander had been informed of it. His reply was being awaited. Even Marshal Kutusoff was said to be strongly in favour of peace.

The Russians diverted the King with this talk, paralysed his activity by their solicitous attentions, and the advance-guard, wholly occupied in the exchange of compliments, made scarcely any progress from day to day. This was all the more to the taste of our troops, who regretted every step that took them further from the Moscow cellars and all the good things that were being enjoyed by those who remained in the city. Thanks to their nearness to the capital, they were still able to participate every day in these things, for it was possible to send in messengers every day and to procure provisions.

Pleased as he was with the news from the King, the Emperor threw doubts on his reports as to the Russian retreat.

"Murat is their dupe. It is impossible that Kutusoff should stay on that road;¹ by doing so he covers neither Petersburg nor the southern provinces."

¹ The advance-guard, commanded by Murat, and in his absence by Sébastiani, had pursued the enemy at first along the Vladimir and Kasan road, afterwards along the Kolomna and Riazan road. It had cleared the river as far as Bronitsoui.

The Emperor repeated these words at every opportunity, and even joked about this march, about which he appeared to have doubts. In vain did he order the King to push the enemy vigorously, in vain did he advise him to place no trust in the Russians, to send out strong reconnaissances in order to find out what they were planning and the direction they were following. It was in vain even that he made the King start from Moscow sooner than he wished to do, for fear that his Generals might not act with sufficient energy.

Reluctant to place himself at too great a distance, and doubtless not realizing the importance of the Emperor's orders,¹ the King acted in a leisurely way, made but a slight advance each day, merely changing his position from one place to another. (I am repeating what I heard at the time from the Emperor.) To justify his slowness the King repeated that he was coaxing the Cossacks, who no longer wished to fight against us; that he might have attacked them, though they would not fire on our troops; in short, that they were no longer defending themselves, but were actually on the point of leaving the Russian Army. He added, moreover, that he found the peasants very discontented, and many of them already talking of gaining their freedom.

The Prince of Neuchâtel showed me two of these letters; the Emperor let me see three or four more, all containing the same details, and asked me what I thought.

"I think they are fooling the King of Naples," I said.

The Emperor and the Prince thought likewise.

Seeing the uselessness of his repeated orders to the King that he should push the enemy vigorously and send out reconnaissances in different directions to find out where Kutusoff was and unmask his movements, the Emperor formed a corps for the Duke of Istria, composed of Davout's infantry

Arrived there, Sebastiani discovered that there was nothing behind the curtain of Cossacks that always hung in front of him. His report of this reached the Kremlin during the night of 21st-22nd. On the 22nd, the surprise attack in the direction of Mojaïsk that has already been mentioned was delivered, and this made the Emperor fear that Kutusoff was only manœuvring to cut off his retreat.

¹ Napoleon ordered Murat to proceed from the Riazan road to the Toulou road and to advance until he had obtained some news of Kutusoff.

and the cavalry of the Guard, to which he joined La Houssaye's division.¹

Suspecting that the Russians would try to cover Kalouga, the Emperor sent the Marshal to Desna with orders to push forward until his advance-guard was actually on the tracks of the Russian army.² It was also necessary to drive off those bodies of enemy who were only a day distant from Moscow, harassing us, and even intercepting our foraging parties. Bessières arrived at Desna on the 25th, while Poniatowski entered Podolsk, where he was joined by the King of Naples, who had recognized his error and began to carry out the movement on Kalouga ordered by the Emperor. Up to this time he had kept in constant touch with the Cossacks. Having given them his watch and his jewels, he would even have given them the shirt off his back, had he not discovered that the good Cossacks were playing with him and keeping him on the Kasan road while the Russian Army, masked by their manœuvres, had been on the Kalouga road for five days, having made their march at night, lit up by the flames of the burning capital.³

On the 19th Kutusoff had taken up his position near Desna and entrenched himself. But in consequence of the King of Naples's reports, Napoleon did not know for certain until the 26th what were the enemy's suspected movements. There was nothing to do but make the best of it. The Emperor complained bitterly of the King, and did not mince words either to his face or in his despatches, but he had to resign himself to having on his flank those very Russians whose movement towards Kasan he had, rightly, been unable to explain to himself.

To the details which the Emperor had previously recounted as to the Cossacks' behaviour towards the King, the Emperor

¹ This corps actually comprised the 3rd Corps of Cavalry, the 4th Division of Davout's corps, the Colbert brigade of Lancers of the Guard. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19216: Napoleon to Berthier, September 21st.)

² Bessières at first followed the Toula road, then, veering to the south-west, he made for Desna, on the Kalouga road.

³ Taking advantage of the course of the Pakra, which describes a semicircle to the south of Moscow, Kutusoff had been at Krasnaia-Pakra on the Kalouga road since the 19th. During this march his army had seen the glow of the fires of Moscow, and Kutusoff had naturally placed the responsibility of these on the French.

added the following particulars, saying that he advised his ambassadors to be as "slim" and shrewd as those barbarian Cossack officers had been.

Had the King the desire to march? A Cossack colonel would come and beseech him not to fight uselessly. "We are not your enemies," he would say. "We want peace; we are awaiting a reply from Petersburg." If the King insisted, the colonel would inquire where he desired to go, so that they could act accordingly. He was asked where he wished to establish his headquarters. Were we going to attack? The Russians would retire without showing opposition. During the two last days, it was even agreed that there should be no destruction or confiscation in the villages which the King was to occupy. Did he complain of finding no inhabitants, and all the houses abandoned? He was told that he would find all the inhabitants in the village where he was placing his headquarters; everything was kept ready and prepared for him. However, the less friendly Cossacks, or those who were not aware of what was afoot, seized some horses, carriages and all the provisions which the King and his staff had brought up from Moscow. The King was angry; and satisfaction was promised.

While he was waiting this, the King, who had taken umbrage on receiving the order to support the Duke of Istria's movements, threw forward his reconnaissances, and at last perceived that there was merely a curtain of the enemy before him, and that his courteous Cossacks, so ready to make common cause with us, had all the while been playing with him, and that the Russian Army, which he had believed to be on the Kasan road, was already in position and well established on the Kalouga road. The King's credulity, which might have proved so fatal to us if the enemy had seized the opportunity of their night movement to make an attack on Moscow, actually bore no bad results for us; so the Emperor contented himself with making a joke of it. It is impossible to gauge the consequences that might have ensued had the enemy shown any audacity, for they would have caught our men in all the disorder that accompanies pillage parties, while we ourselves

SHALL WE STAY AT MOSCOW?

were secure in our belief, founded on the King's despatches, that the Russian Army was in full retreat.

Our troops were concentrated on the point occupied by the Russians, and the Emperor, seeing that the enemy army that had been defeated at the Moskowa and, according to the King of Naples, was disorganized and demoralized by the taking of Moscow, was yet in a position so near us that our men could hope for no rest, decided to make an attack if the offensive operations of the King, supported by the Duke of Istria and the Poles, had not obliged the Russians to retreat. He accordingly gave the order to advance. On the 27th¹ it looked as if the enemy wished to defend their position, and this decided the Emperor to prepare everything for action. But on the 29th he learned, as he had anticipated, that Kutusoff had withdrawn to the entrenchments he had thrown up behind the Nara.² Bessières returned to Moscow. During these operations there were several skirmishes to our advantage, one of which was greatly to the honour of the Polish corps and Prince Poniatowski.

By September 23rd our convoys were already somewhat disturbed; the *pourparlers* between our advance-guard and the Cossacks were still being carried on; and the Emperor was displeased and forbade their continuance. The purport of these conversations was repeated in Moscow and came back to the Emperor; and the matter seemed so grave that he gave it his particular attention. He was especially suspicious of what was talked about with regard to General Sébastiani's corps.

"These communications," said Napoleon, "are made for no other purpose than to alarm the army about its remoteness from France, and the climate, and the winter. I know it is being said that this is an unjust war, that it is impolitic, and my attack on the Russians an act of iniquity. My soldiers are being told of the peaceful aims of the Tsar, of his moderation

¹ After the 26th Kutusoff had retreated as far as Babenkovo. On the 27th he moved to Woronovo, where he made a show of offering resistance.

² On the 28th Kutusoff was at Winkovo. At last, on the 29th, he took up his position about Taroutino, still on the road from Moscow to Kalouga, and put himself into position for holding Podolsk.

and his liking for the French. By their smooth speeches the Russians are trying to turn our brave fellows into traitors, to paralyse the courage of stout-hearted men, and to gain partisans for their cause. Murat is the dupe of men far more astute than himself. In spite of what Belliard¹ and other good men tell him, he is carried away by the assumed respect and reverence of the Cossacks. Having been deceived as to the direction Kutusoff had taken, he would have been misled much more seriously had I not called him to order. I will have the first man who speaks with the enemy shot, even if he be a General."

Indeed, orders were promulgated absolutely forbidding any intercourse with the enemy *under pain of death*, and to spare the susceptibilities of the King of Naples this order was addressed to General Sébastiani.²

Matters had reached such a pitch that a sort of tacit armistice was in operation with the advance-guard, and the enemy profited by this to lull our suspicions and send parties to Smolensk, where they burned fifteen of our ammunition wagons which they were unable to carry away. These parties delayed the couriers, made the rear posts of the army uneasy, and caused the Emperor one of the greatest annoyances he suffered during the whole of the campaign. This mania for having intercourse with the enemy even spread to the troops under the command of the Duke of Istria. The Emperor found it such a vexation that he even disapproved of two flags of truce having been received and forbade the Duke to admit any more, ordering him to have any further letters from the enemy accepted at the outposts and handed back, in order to avoid any personal conversations.

"All these talkings under a flag of truce," he said to Berthier in my hearing, "serve no good save to those who send them, and they invariably turn out to our disadvantage."

¹ General Belliard, Acting Major-General of Cavalry, had been wounded in the leg at Mojaïsk, and was being cared for at Moscow.

² See Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 177, for Berthier's letter to Murat, dated Moscow, September 22nd, four o'clock in the afternoon: "His Majesty has dictated to me the letter enclosed for General Sébastiani; he decrees the penalty of death for any officer who shall talk under flag of truce with the enemy's outposts without authority to do so." With regard to the letter from the Emperor to Sébastiani, an extract of this is given by Denniée (*Itinéraire*, 100).

SHALL WE STAY AT MOSCOW?

He ordered Berthier to send this message to the Marshal.¹

Almost every day the Emperor rode out to visit the different quarters of the city, and inspected the convents in the surroundings, whose high walls gave them the appearance of small citadels. He frequently pushed his reconnaissances to a considerable distance. These convents were either strongly garrisoned or served as barracks. The Emperor had their walls loopholed and put in a state that they could be defended by small detachments in the event of the army advancing to give battle. He gave particular care to the question of provisions, not only for immediate needs but for the winter, as though he had decided to remain in Moscow. He paid special attention to the rank and file, their way of living, and the construction of the defensive works he had ordered. He worked all day and part of the night. France was administered, Germany and Poland felt the impulse of his mind, just as if he had been at the Tuileries. Every day couriers brought despatches and went off with orders to France and Europe. This courier service had become so regular that despatches arrived every day about two o'clock.

After dinner the Emperor received the Marshals, the Viceroy, and such Generals of Division as could leave their commands for a brief period. Three or four times a week he had some of them to dine with the Marshals. In the conversations that followed the meal the Emperor gave the direction he desired to the opinion of those present, and talked politics in the sense that he wished the army to understand them.

French actors,² Italian singers, Tarquinio, the famous

¹ Berthier's letter to Bessières, Moscow, September 27th, 2 a.m., is published by Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 185. It says: "All these conversations with the enemy invariably turned to our disadvantage and served one purpose to those who initiate them."

² There was at Moscow a troop of French comedians under the management of Madame Aurore Bursay, "a woman of from forty-five to fifty years of age, witty, strong-minded and courageous." She was a poetess, having written some verses to Voltaire, and was the wife of M. Bursay, "translator of the play *Misanthropie et Repentir*, which moved all Paris to tears and was put on the repertory of the Théâtre français." Madame Bursay had long held the management of the Théâtre français at Petersburg. (Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 127.)

tenor,¹ and various foreign craftsmen had remained in Moscow up to the very moment of the evacuation, of which they knew nothing, and had been ignorant as to how or where to take refuge. The fire and subsequent pillage left them destitute; Tarquinio had scarcely been able to save a single piece of clothing. The Emperor gave them assistance. Everyone took an interest in them; but of what use was money where there was nothing left to buy? It was bread, food, that they needed. Most of the foodstuffs had become the property of those who had discovered the stores and hiding-places, and everyone kept what he had for himself or his friends. Money could buy neither bread nor meat. What was left in the hands of the administration after serving rations was reserved for the hospitals and convalescents; the corps lived on what they had collected, and this they sought to augment every day. Everyone came to the help of the actors and singers; everyone had some unfortunate refugees to nourish; and the Russians, like the foreigners remaining in Moscow, would have died of hunger had we not succoured them. Some of the Polish officers of the Guard, knowing Russian, were better able than we were to deal with the needs of the unfortunate Russians. Notable among them was Count Krasinski.² They earned the respect of all upright men by their humane behaviour.

The Emperor would have liked to put some prominent Russian at the head of the municipal administration, if only in the interests of the remaining inhabitants. Search was made for such a man, but M. Toutolmine was the only person suitable, and he was too badly needed at the head of his institution to accept other functions.³

¹ "I found a gifted singer, named Signor Tarquinio. This was the same artist who has subsequently gained for himself a brilliant reputation in Italy in the roles of Crescentini. He had been living in Moscow for two years." (*Bausset, Mémoires*, II, 130.)

² Count Vincent Corvin Krasinski (born at Borembel, Poland, January 30, 1785; died at Warsaw, November 24, 1858) was Chamberlain to the Emperor and colonel commanding the 1st Regiment of Light Horse of the Polish Guard. He was promoted General of Brigade, December 16, 1811, and General of Division, November 28, 1813.

³ The administration of Moscow was entrusted to M. de Lesseps, Consul-General of France at Moscow.

As it was long since the Emperor had discussed matters with me, and as the Prince of Neuchâtel at the outset had but a very imperfect knowledge of the negotiations which the Emperor had tried to open up, I only knew of them later. Having invariably found my opinion opposed to his own, the Emperor was so frequently out of humour with me that I did not venture to see even M. Toutolmine. As to M. Zagriaski and the other Russians whom I had taken under my protection during the catastrophe, I had to request the Grand Marshal to make known my action to the Emperor lest it should be misinterpreted. In any case, they were all old men, and people of such insignificance that they had long since ceased to be connected with the government. The Emperor wished to employ them in the administration of the city, and later hinted that he would like to see them; but they refused to undertake any function and declined the honour the Emperor wished to do them, for the very just reason that they had no clothes to wear. It is impossible to conceive their state of destitution.

Some of the actors thought that they would be able to organize an entertainment, and that the presence of so many soldiers with time to spare would bring money into their pockets. As a means of furnishing amusement and likely to bring the men together, the idea was adopted, and the Emperor authorized the opening of the entertainment, entrusting M. de Bausset with the organization. Some old hangings were bought, as well as a quantity of pillaged furniture and effects; in fact, sufficient properties and old garments to clothe the actors.¹ Tarquinio made earnest entreaties that the Emperor should hear him, and sang before His Majesty on two occasions. This was done entirely in private, and lasted a half-hour at the most, there being no other audience than officers of the Emperor's household.² I felt

¹ De Bausset found these costumes in the Church of Ivan, where the military administration had collected everything that could be saved from the flames. The performances took place in the private theatre of the Posniakof Palace. The opening piece was *Jeux de l'Amour et du Hasard*, and eleven performances were given during the stay in Moscow. (Cf. Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 129.)

² On the other hand, the Emperor was never present at the performances at the Posniakof Palace. (Cf. Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 130.)

myself justified in not going, as I never left my own quarters except to accompany the Emperor on horseback. I read much and had no lack of books, although the Galitzin residence where I had established myself and my staff, with the carriages, had been completely ransacked during the night we had gone to Petrowskoie. In the Kremlin I occupied two small rooms opening on the southern terrace. With the exception of the state apartments nothing was furnished, and we were obliged to buy furniture salvaged from burning houses or from abandoned joiners' shops. In this way I bought for a few napoleons portraits of the entire Imperial family of Russia, which the troops were using as screens in their bivouacs.

The Emperor continually grumbled that he could get no news as to what was happening in Russia. As a matter of fact, nothing passed through to us; no secret agent dared to penetrate into the country. Direct communications were extremely difficult, almost impossible. It was not possible to find a single person who for either gold or silver would go to Petersburg or penetrate into the army. The Cossacks were the only enemy troops with whom we came into contact, and however eager the Emperor was to obtain prisoners from whom he might abstract some information, the skirmishers did not succeed in getting any. The sole information received by the Emperor as to events in Russia came from Vienna, Warsaw and Berlin, by way of Wilna.¹ News therefore passed through many hands before it reached him.

The King of Naples continually repeated what Kutusoff had doubtless instructed the Cossack officers to tell him, namely, that "they were tired of war, that the Russians wanted peace, that an understanding ought to be reached, that there were no real motives for prolonging the struggle." The King invariably represented the Russian Army as disheartened and the officers, especially the Generals, as worn out, tired of war, and eager to return to their own homes and get back to Petersburg, from whence an answer was constantly expected. In this way the hopes, or rather the desires, of the Emperor were flattered. Only the Viceroy and the Prince of Neuchâtel held

¹ Where the Duke of Bassano was in constant residence.

a different language. Notwithstanding all these fine speeches from the Russians, he received no word in reply to his overtures. But the silence of the Russian cabinet did not enlighten him as to what he could hope for from negotiations; nothing indeed could persuade him. The stories told by the King of Naples, which he continually ridiculed, none the less fed the hopes he wanted to entertain, in spite of the reflections he must have had, in common with the rest of us, on the subject.

The weather was so fine and the temperature so mild that even the country people were amazed. It seemed as if even the seasons were conspiring to deceive the Emperor.¹ Every day His Majesty remarked very pointedly when I was present, that "the autumn at Moscow was finer and even warmer than at Fontainebleau." He rode on horseback every day, and I do not think he once went out without ironically comparing the weather and temperature with that of France, or without adding, as he hummed one of the old airs to which he adapted certain phrases or apposite verses, "*A beau mentir qui vient de loin.*" Then, for fear that this reflection was not sufficiently pointed, he would sometimes add, remarking on the bright sunshine, "So this is the terrible Russian winter that M. de Caulaincourt frightens the children with."

We had been three weeks in Moscow, and since the battle the Emperor had not mentioned to me the loss of my brother, although he had been most honourably mentioned in the bulletin.²

"What can I do for your brother's aides-de-camp?" were the first words he addressed me about a loss which had been very painful to me. "They must be fine officers, for their General was a splendid man. He would have gone far."

I answered His Majesty that, when he would permit me,

¹ "Magnificent weather; the country people say: 'God must be with you, it is usually much colder.'" (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 166.)

² In the 18th Bulletin, dated from Mojaisk, September 10, 1812, after recounting the charge of the 5th Cuirassiers, with General Auguste de Caulaincourt at the head, and their entry into the redoubt by the gorge, the Emperor added: "From that moment there was no longer any uncertainty, the battle was gained. . . . Count de Caulaincourt, who distinguished himself by this splendid charge, there ended his career; he fell dead, struck by a bullet: a glorious and enviable death!"

I would present several proposals for promotion and reward for them, and for all the officers of my brother's staff, as well as his orderly officers, for whom nothing had been done.

"Let me have it to-day," was the Emperor's reply.¹ His silence about my brother arose solely from his irritation with me, for he spoke well of him to the Prince of Neuchâtel and to Duroc.

On the evening of the battle he had said to the Prince of Neuchâtel, speaking of my brother :

"He was my best cavalry officer. He had a quick eye, and he was brave. By the end of the campaign he would have replaced Murat."

The Emperor granted all the promotions I suggested to him, particularly those for my brother's aides, but he never spoke another word to me about him.²

In the first days of September the crossing of the Dniester

¹ To make this passage clear I ought to observe that the orderly officers, all the aides-de-camp of Generals on the Emperor's staff, interpreter officers, and all Generals or officers attached by the Emperor to his headquarters, were under the orders of the Master of the Horse. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

² A note by Caulaincourt, preserved in his *Archives*, gives a list of the names of his brother's orderly officers for whom he asked some reward. They were: Captain Cham, proposed for the Legion of Honour; Captain Chasteigner, proposed as orderly officer to the Emperor; Lieutenant Wolbert, proposed promotion as captain. Joseph Antoine Barthélemy Cham, born at Marseilles, October 3, 1782; captain, November 8, 1809; had been gazetted orderly officer to Auguste de Caulaincourt, February 28, 1808. He did not receive the Officer's Cross of the Legion of Honour but was promoted major, October 3, 1812, at the time of the promotion of officers in imperial headquarters. Cham became aide-de-camp to the Duke of Vicenza, December 5, 1812. He was retired from the active list, September 1, 1815, and does not appear to have been re-employed. Alexander Armand de Chasteigner, born December 27, 1784, nephew of General d'Harville, had been appointed aide-de-camp to Auguste de Caulaincourt, February 11, 1808. The Emperor appointed him orderly officer to himself, as the Duke of Vicenza had requested, September 23, 1812. He was promoted major, February 26, 1813, and appointed to the 2nd Carabineers on March 16th following. He was retired September 2, 1814, and died in November, 1867. Chasteigner had a brother, René de Chasteigner, who, from April 15, 1812, was aide-de-camp to the Duke of Vicenza. Severely wounded in Russia, on June 25, 1813, he was promoted major, in the 5th Chasseurs. Lieutenant Wolbert, aide-de-camp to Auguste de Caulaincourt from April 1812, was gazetted first lieutenant to the Dragoon Guards on September 23, 1812. In the *Archives de Caulaincourt*, File No. 8, there exists a letter from Berthier to the Duke of Vicenza, dated Moscow, September 23, 1812, in the following terms: "The Emperor is according to the aides-de-camp of your late brother what you have asked for them. His Majesty deeply regrets that he was not able to accord these favours in response to the request of one whom the army has seen perish too early on the field of honour and glory."

CROSSING OF THE DNIESTER

by the army of Moldavia, of which the Emperor received news at this time,¹ as well as the reports of what was happening on the Dwina,² kept him deeply concerned. The Russians had taken the initiative at this point. Although they had been repulsed in their attack on Polotsk on the 18th, Marshal Saint-Cyr, who had been wounded, was obliged to evacuate the place on the 19th. Although all the details of this fine manoeuvre were entirely to our advantage, the possible consequences perturbed the Emperor. The Duke of Taranto had also had a warm encounter at the end of August, and the Russians had attacked Dunaburg at the same time as Polotsk.³

The Finland division of ten thousand men under General Steinheil, whose arrival the Emperor had foreseen, went into the line under the orders of Essen,⁴ who was supporting Wittgenstein. York had replaced Gravert in command of the Prussians.⁵ All these reports that reached the Emperor were grave; everything pointed to the difficulty of his position. But the greater the difficulties the more determined he was to overcome them, and he thought to triumph over the difficulties and dangers that surrounded him on all sides by evincing an assurance and at the same time by overtures of peace which, made directly, would lead, if not to immediate negotiations, at least to an armistice, which would bring these to pass if only conversations could be started.

¹ Tchitchagoff left Bucharest on July 31st with the army of Moldavia which he commanded. Having crossed the Dniester on September 4th, on the 18th he joined Tormasov in the neighbourhood of Lourdsk. Schwarzenberg retired upon Brest-Litowsk, where the two armies once again faced one another on October 9th. Tchitchagoff forced his adversary to recross the Bug and pursued him to Wengrow and Bialystok.

² General Steinheil, with 12,000 Swedes, arrived at Riga on September 20th, and attacked the Prussians on the 26th. As a result of the battles of the 28th, 29th and 30th, York was obliged to withdraw, but Steinheil had by that time joined Wittgenstein, in concert with whom he gave battle to Gouvion Saint-Cyr on October 18th and 19th. This was the second battle of Polotsk, and it determined our retreat.

³ Operations of Wittgenstein's corps against the 10th Army Corps (Macdonald).

⁴ General Baron von Essen was Governor of Riga.

⁵ On October 13th Lieutenant-General York replaced Lieutenant-General von Gravert in the command of the 27th Division of the Prussian contingent (Macdonald's corps). "It was not long before relations between General York and Marshal Macdonald became very strained." (Clausewitz, *La Campagne de 1812*, 182.)

Our situation in Moscow was no better than that of our rear. Hospitals and refugees were on the verge of starvation. The Duke of Treviso made requisitions, but the administration reserved the little that had been saved for more urgent demands. For the most part the corps had reserves of supplies, but the services which a proper administration could supply were in dire need, having neither soldiers nor transports to bring them up. The Emperor had thought that here, as in other campaigns, he would meet with concerns which for gold, or at any rate paper, would deliver what was required, but where there was no proper administration there could be no contractors. Undaunted by difficulties, and, as usual, always seeking to evade what he could not surmount, he thought it would be practicable to make use of the most destitute refugees, for he imagined that the Cossacks who were harassing our own lines of supply would take pity on their compatriots, and thus supply their needs and part of what we ourselves wanted. He therefore ordered the formation of a Russian company to go out into the villages to purchase food; but no one dared to volunteer for it, although they were promised payment in ready cash, for they knew perfectly well that the Cossacks would treat the inhabitants of Moscow no better than they treated its garrison.

On October 22nd or 23rd the Emperor, who had not discussed affairs with me for a long time, asked me whether I thought that the Tsar would be disposed to make peace if overtures were made to him. He did not tell me of those which he had already attempted. I answered frankly that it seemed to me that the sacrifice of Moscow argued a far from pacific disposition, that the more the season advanced the greater were the chances in favour of Russia; in a word, that it was scarcely probable that he would have set fire to his capital with the object of signing a peace among the ruins.

"Will you go to Petersburg?" the Emperor asked me. "You would see the Tsar Alexander, I would entrust you with a letter, and you would make peace."

I answered that it would be useless to send me on such a mission, as I should not be received. Assuming a jocular and kindly air, the Emperor told me that I did not know what I

was saying; for the Tsar would be all the more eager to profit by the opportunity given him to enter into negotiations, inasmuch as his nobles, already ruined by the war and the burning of Moscow, were anxious for peace. He was certain of it. "That fire," he added, "was the sort of folly of which a madman might boast when he kindled the flame, but which he would repent next day. The Tsar Alexander sees quite well that his Generals are incapable, and that the best of troops can do nothing under such leadership."

He continued to press me with arguments to convince me of what he said, and to induce me to accept this mission.

In vain did I repeat all the objections I have mentioned above. The Emperor replied that I was mistaken; that he had just heard from Petersburg that they were packing up in the utmost hurry; that the most valuable effects had already been sent into the interior and even to England;¹ that the Tsar was labouring under no further illusions, for he saw his army diminished and disheartened, while the French army was all ready to march on Petersburg. The season was still favourable, he added, and by such a march the Russian Empire would be lost, for a defeat would gravely embarrass the Tsar, so that he would seize with eagerness any overture made by us, as it would furnish him with an honourable way of getting out of the unfortunate position in which he was placed.

Finding that he was unable to shake my resolution, the Emperor added that, beginning with myself, everyone who had been in Russia had told him fairy-tales about the climate. He then insisted anew on his proposals. Thinking perhaps that my repugnance came from some feeling of embarrassment I might experience at going to Petersburg, where I had been so worthily treated, at a moment when Russia was being thus ravaged, the Emperor said:

"Very well! Just to Marshal Kutusoff's headquarters."

I replied that either would be equally unsuccessful, and added that I recalled what the Tsar Alexander said to me on

¹ Napoleon was well informed. It was true that Alexander had sent to Archangel and Abo a great quantity of valuables. Part of this treasure was embarked on vessels of the Russian Fleet with orders, at the first signal, to make for England.

another occasion, and that I knew his character and was refusing this mission because I was certain that he would never sign a peace in his capital. As this overture of ours, I concluded, could achieve nothing, it was advisable not to make it.¹

The Emperor turned on his heels abruptly, saying:

"Very well, I shall send Lauriston. He shall have the honour of making peace and saving his crown for your friend Alexander."

Shortly afterwards, indeed, the Emperor entrusted M. Lauriston with this mission.

Lauriston presented himself at the Russian headquarters on the 4th and 5th and was handsomely received, being despatched back with the promise that his letter should be forwarded to the Tsar Alexander.² Kutusoff had refused to let him proceed, but it seemed to him that everyone was anxious to put a term to this struggle, of which the Russians seemed even more wearied than we were.³ It was said that a reply would shortly be received from Petersburg, and this delighted the Emperor, who hoped and desired a suspension of hostilities while terms were being made. He supposed that, as was customary in similar circumstances, there would be nothing to do but settle the lines each side was to preserve while the negotiations were going forward.⁴

¹ Ségur (*Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 75) recounts this refusal of Caulaincourt. General Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 300) denies the likelihood of this account. Ségur was right.

² Lauriston left Moscow by carriage, October 4th, for Kutusoff's headquarters. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 164.) Met at the advance posts by Prince Wolkonsky, aide-de-camp to the Tsar, he vainly insisted on seeing Kutusoff in person. Being unable to obtain an audience, he withdrew to Murat's headquarters. In the course of the night, however, the Russian General changed his mind and Lauriston was eventually able to interview him. As a result of this conference Kutusoff sent Prince Wolkonsky to Petersburg with Napoleon's overtures to the Tsar. Caulaincourt is wrong in saying that there was any letter from Napoleon; in reality, Lauriston apparently carried no written document with him.

³ Clausewitz, to prove that Napoleon's deductions were not based on entire illusions, writes: "At this period there was a general feeling of despondency and mourning in the Russian Army. No other issue than a prompt peace seemed possible." (*La Campagne de 1812*, 144.)

⁴ In his interview with Lauriston, Kutusoff refused any kind of armistice, but he had agreed that the advance posts should cease fire. Kutusoff reserved his freedom of action, however, in the two extreme wings, thus leaving the field free to the raids of Cossacks.

From what the Prince of Neuchâtel and Duroc told me, the Emperor attributed the Tsar's silence regarding the overtures made at Smolensk,¹ and since our arrival at Moscow, to the conviction held by the Russians since the return of Balachoff from Wilna, and thought that he would consider no arrangement that did not have the restoration of Poland on some scale as its basis. The Emperor began to think, however, that the course of events and the burning of the countryside had turned their heads, and that the destruction of Moscow had, for the time being at least, carried them away with enthusiasm. He even doubted whether his plenipotentiary would be received, and on the night before Lauriston's departure wrote to the King of Naples telling him to announce to the Russians that one of his aides-de-camp was being sent, and to assure himself in advance that he would be received.² At heart he still flattered himself that negotiations would be opened; at least he said so, and he must be believed, since he stayed at Moscow in spite of overtures remaining unanswered, and although the lapse of time since his first endeavours, and his reason itself, must have cried aloud that Alexander had no wish to treat. None the less, he stubbornly set to work on fresh approaches.

Like everyone else, the Emperor felt that his repeated messages, indicative of his embarrassment, could only confirm the enemy in his hostile intentions. Yet he sent fresh messages! For a man of such fine political sense, of such careful calculation, how blind must have been his faith, his confidence in his star! What blindness or feebleness he must have attributed to his foes! With his eagle eye and his pre-eminent judgment, how could he have entertained illusions on such a point? I leave these reflections to observers of human nature, for such opposites in so great a character, this tendency of the heart to imagine what it most desires even in face of all improbabilities, would be a great reproach in a man of the Emperor's exalted judgment, were not this strange

¹ Count Orloff's mission.

² This note from Berthier to Murat, dated October 4th, 4.30 a.m., has been published by Chuquet, 1812 *La Guerre de Russie*, 84. A second note from the same to the same, October 5th, 4.30 a.m., proves the Emperor's impatience to know the result of this affair.

contradiction a part of our nature, and were not this hope a man's last consolation in adversity.

The King of Naples, who, despite all orders to the contrary, continued to treat with the enemy, repeated his assertions that the Cossacks did not want to fight any more, that the Russian Army desired peace as it was felt they were in an advantageous position owing to the arrival of reinforcements and could make a good peace, and that Marshal Kutusoff and all his Generals had written in this sense to the Tsar, whom they urged to listen to peace proposals. All these assertions accorded so well with the Emperor Napoleon's desires that they sustained the hopes which were to be his undoing. The Russian officers beguiled the King of Naples with all these tales. The Cossacks were accustomed to notice him, on account of his singular uniform, and seeing him the bravest man in the midst of his gallant skirmishers, always refrained from shooting in his direction. Their officers came to compliment him, assuring him, as before, that so highly did they admire his bravery that they were resolved never to fire on him but to content themselves with making him prisoner. One day, however, a Cossack who had evidently been imperfectly coached in this new system of advance-guard politics, fired a pistol almost point-blank at him while His Majesty was chatting and strolling about. Happily he was not hit. Instantly an officer came up to offer excuses and to assure His Majesty that this disloyal enemy would be punished. One good resulted from this incident. The King lost something of his confidence, and was less inclined to believe in the pacific dispositions of these gentry.

Both the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Duke of Friuli repeated to me what I am about to recount as proof that the Emperor, who was detained at Moscow by his hopes of concluding a peace, had no illusions as to his position, although he tried to impose them upon many other people, especially myself. He kept telling us that the situation of Moscow, with its ruins and such resources as had been salvaged, was preferable to any other in Russia; that peace could only be made there; that the weather was superb; that a mistake had been made about the climate; that the autumn was finer at

Moscow than at Fontainebleau. But while saying all this publicly, he admitted from the very outset, to those persons whom he honoured with his more intimate confidence, that Moscow was a bad situation, and that he could remain there only long enough to reorganize; that the Austrians and Prussians, the allies entrusted with the defence of our rear, would become our most dangerous enemies if we met with the slightest reverse.

However clear-sighted he may have been on this point, his enthusiasm was such, and so eager was he to nurture the illusions and hopes raised in his own mind, that he nursed the hope of receiving a reply from the Tsar, or at least negotiations for an armistice with Kutusoff, which should lead to further results. It might almost be said that he was carried away by the very difficulty of his situation and blinded as to his perils, so that every development combined to close his eyes and push him further in the path of danger.

The Prince of Neuchâtel had received, together with a despatch from Prince Schwarzenberg, a letter which gave him food for serious thought, as it also did to Daru, Duroc and myself, to whom he showed it. Prince Schwarzenberg's loyalty and honourable sentiments gave especial value to this letter. In brief, its sense was the following: "The position is already embarrassing, the situation may become graver; anyhow, whatever happened, the Prince assured Berthier of his personal sentiments and of the value he placed and would always place on his relations with him."

Discussing this letter with Berthier, the Emperor said:

"This gives warning of defection on the first opportunity. It may even have started already. The Austrians and the Prussians are our enemies in the rear——"

He paused, reflected, and added:

"The die is cast. '*Du destin qui fait tout, telle est la loi suprême!*'"

Berthier urged the instant necessity of pursuing his original plan as soon as possible, which was to leave Moscow and move back towards Poland, as this would circumvent all their malice and double the strength of our forces.

"You are anxious to go to Grosbois and see the Visconti,"¹ was the Emperor's reply to him.

Seeing that he had hurt him, the Emperor added:

"This letter is sentimental nonsense. Schwarzenberg is making up to you because he prefers shooting your pheasants at Grosbois, or his own in Bohemia, to being worried every morning by Tormasov. On the other hand, Maret is very pleased with him. He knows all that is going on. All is well at Vienna, and even the Prussians are fighting perfectly. If there was anything happening, Maret has every means of information at hand and would know about it. He is satisfied; he tells me that all is well, and we will wait at Moscow for Alexander's reply, for he is much worse embarrassed than I am with his Senate and the Kutusoff they have forced upon him."

While headquarters were dreaming dreams of negotiations and peace, the Cossacks were harrying our foragers daily and seizing prisoners almost at the very gates of the city. They also appeared between Mojaïsk and Moscow. A few isolated men were chased and captured; one courier was delayed fifteen hours, and this worried the Emperor extremely. Every quarter of an hour he asked me, as well as the Major-General, whether we had learned anything of the cause of his delay. I profited by the occasion to renew the demand I had been making ever since our arrival for an escort for the courier, even if only a couple of men; but to establish this at all the relays would have entailed a considerable detachment of troops, and the cavalry was already greatly reduced in strength. So the Emperor thought to dismiss the matter by saying that it was an unnecessary precaution as the road was perfectly safe.

Three days later the postillion driving the courier to Paris escaped several gunshots beyond Mojaïsk, and was chased for a couple of leagues. Thereupon, the Emperor lost no time in sending out the detachments I had asked for.

¹ The beautiful Josephine Carcano, widow of Giovanni Sopransi, had married François Visconti. It was known that she was Berthier's mistress. The château of Grosbois, near Boissy-Saint-Léger, was Berthier's estate. His hunting parties were famous.

Mojaïsk, where the ambulance headquarters were, was surrounded by parties of the enemy, yet it was occupied by the corps of the Duke of Abrantès, while other troops were echeloned along the road by which strong detachments and convoys came from France every day. As I have said, the slightest delay in his communications with Paris irritated and disquieted the Emperor, though the enemy could have obtained no real advantage by seizing the despatches, as all important papers were in cipher. But it was disagreeable to him to see his communications with France threatened, nor did he desire the news to be known there, or in Europe, that the enemy was at our rear.

The Emperor became very preoccupied, and undoubtedly began to consider inwardly the inconveniences of the situation which he had hitherto sought to conceal. Neither the losses incurred in the battle nor the state of his cavalry had perturbed him so much as the appearance of a few Cossacks on our rear. During his conversations while walking, or at the reception after dinner where his Marshals and Generals were invited along with the principal personages of the household, the Emperor always talked of the fine weather, or how the winter could be spent in Moscow, of the blockhouses that he would establish for the protection of his camps, of his plans for keeping his men fit and rested and protected from the cold, of his project to place his cavalry within the lines, of the Polish Cossacks whom he was expecting and whom he would oppose to the Russians. The Emperor likewise openly announced his intention of marching against Kutusoff to drive him further away and thus give the army some repose. He talked of the news he had received from the Duke of Bassano, of the considerable levies that were to be made in Poland, and the expected arrival of 6000 Cossacks from that country.

He enumerated the French divisions which were on the march to reinforce the corps on the Dwina, some of them to cover and echelon our own road. It was the Emperor's plan to establish another route of communication with France through less exhausted countries. To achieve this, he told the Prince of Neuchâtel, he was waiting the result of the

operations to be undertaken by the corps on the Dwina. In his general conversation the Emperor represented Austria as being very amicably disposed, and frankly desiring our success in order to recover their maritime provinces and at the same time to see in the centre of Europe a buffer State in whose interest it would be to check the terrifying Russian colossus.

It was at this time that the Emperor instituted means for the evacuation of Generals and wounded unable to rejoin their units at once. To these were added men of the rank and file who had lost limbs, as well as cadres of non-commissioned officers taken from all the regiments, who were to organize the new corps that were being trained in France. Everyone was required to supply horses and carriages, the Emperor himself setting an example. The ambulance administration existing no longer save on paper, Lieutenant-General Nansouty, himself wounded, was placed in command of this convoy, which crossed the Niemen before the extreme cold set in, and luckily reached France in safety.¹ In preparation for this evacuation, the Emperor required from the Intendant-General² a report as to the time it would take to reach the Niemen, and was much upset at the estimated number of days, either because he did not like to think he was so far from his point of departure, or because he thought that others, making the same calculation for themselves, would be discouraged. He questioned the calculation and grew very angry, as if Count Dumas could have shortened the distance!³

The overtures made to Petersburg remained unanswered, and the Cossacks continued to harry the fringes of Moscow. They had even penetrated the suburbs, and seized men and horses who were not foraging. Strong escorts of cavalry and infantry were required for their protection. The

¹ This convoy left Moscow on October 10th for Wilna. The escort was composed of cadres of the fourth battalions sent to the depots.

² Count Mathieu Dumas.

³ According to Denniée (*Itinéraire*, 105) Dumas informed the Emperor that it would take fifty days to evacuate the wounded. According to Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 147) this estimate should have been forty-five days. Not satisfied with this, Napoleon ordered Dumas to draw up a report on the state of the wounded. This showed a total exceeding 12,000 wounded and sick, of whom very few were fit to stand the fatigues of the road.

couriers were often chased, and some would hardly have escaped capture had it not been for the failure of the Cossacks to realize the importance of the correspondence they carried, which was held up for forty-eight hours. Often the letters were only saved by the speed of the horse that bore them, and to the courage of the brave French postillions, who allowed no danger to hinder them and made it a point of honour to keep their despatches safe and deliver them. These delays and real dangers constantly threatening the post made a profound impression on the Emperor.

Although he dropped no hint as to plans for a retreat, not even to the Prince of Neuchâtel, I think it was at this juncture that the Emperor decided to evacuate Moscow and retire to Witepsk to take up the line he had formerly wished to hold and to place his troops in winter quarters. But although he had resolved to do this, he unfortunately continued to delay the execution of his plans, however much he realized the urgency of the matter, because he liked above all else to imagine that what he desired would be successful. He could not admit to himself that fortune, which had so often smiled upon him, had quite abandoned his cause just when he required miracles of her. He still wanted to hope that his overtures would lead to negotiations. I repeat, it was to this hope that he sacrificed the precious moments we were still to spend in Moscow, moments that might have been used to save the army, when it is remembered that, had he started at once, there would have been time to reach Wilna before suffering the rigours of winter.

Instead of improving, our situation grew daily worse, owing to the difficulties forced upon us by the proximity of the enemy and the attacks of his numerous light troops.

We were continually on the look-out; the wearied artillery, already reduced in strength, had no repose whatever; the horses not actually with the guns were sent, like those of the cavalry, for wood and forage, the men in search of food. Beyond Ghjat our communications were always harassed and between Mojaïsk and ourselves were frequently interrupted.

A new convoy of artillery had been attacked and several ammunition wagons captured near the manor of Wezianino, where the Emperor had slept before entering Moscow. Anyone could see in these preliminaries the signs of a new system of warfare designed to isolate us. It would have been impossible to devise one that could have given the Emperor more trouble or have affected his interests more severely. We discussed it with him—the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Viceroy and myself, if I may venture to couple myself with such authorities.

Matters seemed to me to be taking so serious a turn that I felt it my duty to emerge from the reserve which I had so long imposed upon myself. I requested an audience of the Emperor. As I saw him daily and always accompanied him wherever he went, he seemed astonished at my formal request, and, granting it immediately, commented:

“Well, what is the urgency? Anything out of the ordinary?” he said.

My observations on the dangers of a protracted sojourn at Moscow, and of the winter, if we marched during the cold, were received most graciously, though at the moment they evoked no reply or hint which could give me any indication of his intentions.

“Caulaincourt is already half-frozen,” he said to Duroc and the Prince of Neuchâtel, when telling them what I had done.

The Prince and the Viceroy had themselves submitted to the Emperor all the inconveniences and even dangers that would arise from a more prolonged stay in Moscow. The carelessness and negligence of our troops in looking after themselves added to the misfortunes of our situation, and I have no doubt that the Emperor saw and thought as we did. But the difficulty of getting out of his embarrassing position gave fresh food to his hopes of entering into negotiations and held him a prisoner in the Kremlin.

Some time about September 24th, the Mojaïsk road being entirely cut out by a corps of Russian dragoons and Cossacks, the Emperor sent some squadrons of chasseurs and dragoons

ARMY STRENGTH

of the Guard, and they had several skirmishes with the Russian cavalry. Our dragoons, having pushed a successful charge too far, were surrounded by superior forces and obliged to yield.¹ Major Marthod,² a few officers, some dragoons and part of two squadrons were taken prisoners. Although the utmost bravery had been shown, this slight reverse suffered by the Guard corps irritated the Emperor as much as the loss of a battle; but it must be remembered that at the time this incident made more impression than the loss of fifty general officers at the battle of the Moskowa.

Other points on the Smolensk road were similarly intercepted by enemy parties, with the result that all certain communication with France was cut off. Wilna, Warsaw, Mayence, Paris were no longer in daily receipt of their orders from the sovereign master of the Great Empire. In Moscow the Emperor waited in vain for despatches from his ministers, reports from his governors, news from Europe. From a glance at our faces one might have thought that the possibility of such an interruption had never been even contemplated. It was all right to have to fight in order to get a crust of bread, to risk being taken prisoner for the sake of a truss of hay, to run the chance of being frozen to death by staying in Russia; everyone was familiar with such possibilities—or rather probabilities; but the idea that an expected letter from France might not arrive had entered nobody's mind. General de Saint-Sulpice³ was sent with a body of mounted Guard and re-established our communications.

At the end of this month so rashly passed in Moscow, the French Army was composed of an active force of 95,000 men. The infantry of the Old Guard was about 5000 strong; the Young Guard about 10,000; the cavalry of the Guard 4000; the cavalry of the army from 10,000 to 15,000. Of the 500

¹ This incident occurred in the night of September 25th–26th, near Malo-Wiasma. See above, p. 253.

² Louis Ignace Marthod, born at Chambéry, November 7, 1771. Since January 5, 1809, colonel. He was major of the Dragoons of the Imperial Guard. He died in captivity, October 5, 1812.

³ Raymond Gaspard de Bonardi de Saint-Sulpice, born at Paris, December 25, 1761, died June 20, 1835. He was General of Brigade, March 24, 1805, General of Division, February 14, 1807.

guns that the army still possessed, more than half might have been limbered up. The hospitals in Moscow held 15,000 Frenchmen, and those of Mojaïsk the men who had been badly wounded at the Moskowa. Work continually went on to put the Kremlin into a state of defence. During the early days of October ten guns were already in place and the monasteries round the city loopholed.

Although the Emperor had by now almost determined to leave Moscow, the grave political considerations that held him there also prevented him from taking any of the measures necessary to ensure his retreat. He thought that his declared intention of passing the winter in Moscow and organizing the surrounding country would alarm the enemy and make them more disposed to treat, and this was what the Emperor naturally desired above all else. By action as well as by word of mouth, he sought to convince everybody of this.

Being desirous of sending to Paris some trophies of his sojourn in Moscow, he made inquiries as to what should be sent to France as tokens of the success of his arms.¹ He visited every part of the Kremlin himself, as well as the church of Ivan Veliki and the other church alongside it.

The Poles had always mentioned the church of Ivan Veliki as being the object of the Russians' devotion, and even superstition. The iron cross² surmounting the belfry, the Emperor was told, was venerated by all the Orthodox, so he gave orders that it should be taken down. The difficulty was to do this, as no workmen could be found to climb to such a height. The Prince of Neuchâtel, like everyone else, was reluctant to deprive an already ruined city of part of the sole monument left intact within its walls. The Emperor repeated his order,

¹ "These trophies comprised various curious objects found in the Kremlin, among others the flags taken from the Turks by the Russians over a hundred years earlier, some ancient armour, a madonna which the devout had enriched with diamonds, and the gilded cross from the belfry of Ivan Veliki which had so long dominated all the domes of Moscow." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 149.)

² As far as I can recollect, a Russian proclamation that had been shown to the Emperor, or some report that he had received, spoke of the cross of Ivan Veliki as one of the sacred objects in the hands of the enemy, the recovery of which should be the first aim of all the faithful. This fixed the Emperor's determination. (Note by Caulaincourt.)

and specially charged the Sappers of the Guard with the execution of it. From that moment there could be no more talk of difficulties, but the cross, partly dismounted, was not so much taken down as dropped to the ground.¹ To this iron cross were added various objects which were believed to be used at the coronations of the Tsars, and two old cannon asked for by the Poles, as having formerly been taken from them by the Russians. But the cannon remained in position, for, as not one horse was left in the whole country to replace our own losses, and we had not enough to harness our artillery, we could not spare any for taking away trophies. So the Poles contented themselves with some old standards which the Russians had formerly captured from them and had left in the arsenal.

At Moscow, negotiations advanced no further than before. Our position on the Dwina had been made more difficult by the retreat we had been forced to make after Marshal Saint-Cyr had been wounded and Wittgenstein had received reinforcements.² The position could only be aggravated by the imminent appearance at our rear of the Army of Moldavia, which the Emperor estimated at no more than three divisions, making 20,000.³ Their destination was not known, and the

¹ "Part of the dome of the Kremlin was demolished and the cross of Iwanowich [sic]; it was broken in falling." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 170.) "One of the cables of the crane broke at a critical moment. The equilibrium was lost, the weight of the chains dragged down the cross and part of the scaffolding. The ground was shaken by the enormous weight of this falling mass, and the cross was broken into three pieces." (Peyrusse, *Mémorial et Archives*, 1869, 106.)

² Caulaincourt is anticipating events. After the first battle of Polotsk (August 16th and 17th), Oudinot, being wounded, passed over the command of the 2nd Corps to Gouvion Saint-Cyr, who was in command of the 6th Corps (Bavarian). The Russians had withdrawn behind the Drissa, and the two armies faced one another for a couple of months without anything of importance occurring. It was not until October 18th and 19th, at the same moment that Moscow was being evacuated, that Wittgenstein, reinforced by the 12,000 Swedes under General Steinheil, fought the second battle of Polotsk, in the course of which Gouvion Saint-Cyr was wounded by a bullet in the left foot. After the loss of Polotsk the 6th Corps retired on Gloubokoje and the 2nd on Tcharniki. to join up with Victor. It is superfluous to add that Napoleon could have had no knowledge of these events before he left Moscow.

³ As noted above, the Army of Moldavia, 55,000 strong, commanded by Tchitchagoff, had joined Tornasov in the neighbourhood of Lourdsk on September 18th, and the two armies having thus united, it compelled Schwarzenberg to recross the Bug in October.

Emperor worried little about it at the time;¹ for he thought that Kutusoff, as Commander-in-Chief, who had been forced on the Tsar by party tactics, was too anxious to maintain his own credit by his own personal successes not to keep all his best troops with his own army.² But as our position grew worse, the Emperor decided to call up his reserves from the Niemen, and on the 6th ordered the Duke of Belluno, who had crossed that river on September 4th, to concert with the Duke of Bassano at Wilna.³ The Duke of Bassano possessed the Emperor's entire confidence, and had the direction as well as the knowledge of all that was going on, and was thus in a position to give the Duke of Belluno the fullest information, and all the private and political details which could not be communicated in despatches.

The Major-General instructed the Duke of Belluno to proceed between Orcha and Smolensk in such a manner as to cover Wilna, and to act as reserve to Saint-Cyr if he was forced to Polotsk, to Schwarzenberg if he was pressed by Tormasov, and even to the Grand Army of Moscow,⁴ in case of need. In addition to his three divisions,⁵ he had under his orders Dombrowski with at least 6000 infantry and 12,000

¹ Napoleon to Berthier, Moscow, October 6, 1812 (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19258): "The Russian Army of Moldavia, of a strength of three divisions, or of 20,000 men including infantry, cavalry and artillery, crossed the Dnieper(?) early in September. It is possibly going to Moscow to reinforce the army commanded by General Kutusoff, or to Wolhynia to reinforce Tormasov's army."

² Napoleon showed clear foresight. On several occasions Kutusoff ordered Tchitchagoff to rejoin him, but the first of these orders was not delivered at its destination until after the union with Tormasov, and the second when the action against Schwarzenberg was already started. A third order, of September 27th, was not obeyed either. (Cf. Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, 125.)

³ On July 4th, Victor, who commanded the 9th Corps, received instructions to move from Berlin to Marienburg; on July 22nd to go to Tilsit, and on September 4th to Minsk. Eventually, on September 11th, Napoleon ordered the 9th Corps to make for Smolensk. In pursuance of Napoleon's orders to Berthier, October 6, 1812 (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19258), Victor received the order to quarter his corps between Smolensk and Orcha. By this letter of October 6th the Emperor ordered the Duke of Belluno "to maintain a close correspondence by means of couriers with the Duke of Bassano, so that that minister could write to him and impart all the news from different quarters."

⁴ This role of General of Reserves is specified in the despatches of October 6th from Napoleon to Berthier, quoted above.

⁵ The 12th Division (General Partouneaux), the 26th Division (General Daendels), and the 28th Division (General Girard).

REORGANIZATION

Polish cavalry formed from new levies in the neighbourhood of Minsk,¹ and the Westphalian brigade from Wilna.²

At the same time the 32nd Infantry Division, formed in part of Germans, was being organized at Warsaw under the orders of General Durutte³ and the 34th, under General Loison, was ordered to leave Königsberg for Wilna.⁴ All our forces were being collected and echeloned to support us and make a front against the dangers that might menace our rear.

The Duke of Belluno left General Baraguay d'Hilliers at Smolensk,⁵ and, in consequence of what had happened on the Dwina, took command of the corps⁶ which General Legrand had refused after Saint-Cyr was wounded, and which General Merle⁷ had taken slowly to Tcharniki, despite the superior forces of the enemy who dared not press him. There he joined the Duke of Belluno,⁸ who had reached Smolensk on the 26th. This Marshal thus united under his command the 2nd, 6th and 9th Corps; the 2nd and 9th alone making more than 56,000 men.

¹ Jean Honoré Dombrowski, born at Warsaw, August 29, 1755, died there June 6, 1818. He entered the service of France in 1796, was gazetted General of Division February 10, 1800. In 1812 he commanded the 17th Division (5th Army Corps under Poniatowski, or Poles).

² This reserve brigade was actually composed of the 4th Westphalian Regiment, the two Hesse-Darmstadt battalions, and eight guns. The two Hesse battalions were not to join until the end of October.

³ General Pierre François Joseph Durutte, born at Douai, July 14, 1767, died April 18, 1827. He became General of Division, August 27, 1805. This 52nd Division was composed of the regiments from Walcheren, Bellisle and the Mediterranean.

⁴ General Louis Henri Loison, born at Damvillers (Meuse), May 15, 1771, died at Stockel (Belgium), November 30, 1816. General of Division, October 19, 1799, he was appointed Governor of Königsberg, July 6, 1812, in place of Hogen-dorp, and the same day he received orders to form a division of six Saxon battalions, two battalions from the Vistula, two Westphalian battalions, and the regiment of Saxon Light Cavalry.

⁵ Louis Baraguay d'Hilliers, father of the soldier who was Marshal under the Second Empire, was born in Paris, August 13, 1764. He was promoted General of Division, March 10, 1797, and appointed Governor of Smolensk, August 27, 1812. On November 9th a division under his command was beaten and the Augereau brigade, which formed part of it, compelled to surrender. This was the first time in the 1812 campaign that a French detachment had capitulated. Napoleon was furious. He sent Baraguay back to Königsberg and ordered an inquiry. The General died of chagrin, January 6, 1815.

⁶ The 2nd Corps, reinforced by the 6th, repulsed at Polotsk, October 19th.

⁷ General Merle had previously commanded the 9th Division. General Legrand retained the command of the 6th Division.

⁸ The junction of these corps was effected October 29th.

Letters from Prince Schwarzenberg, dated at the end of September, gave confirmation of the march of the Army of Moldavia, which, he said, was intended to reinforce the corps opposed to him, but for reasons which I have indicated above, the Emperor doubted the genuineness of this movement.

He urged his army on the Dwina to take the offensive, but wrong directions given to two divisions caused the failure of operations planned for the 30th, and Wittgenstein profited by this to drive us beyond the Lukomla.¹

On Lauriston's return the Emperor spoke to me of his mission, and on this occasion discussed matters in a friendly tone to which I was unaccustomed.

"The Emperor Alexander is stubborn," he said. "He will regret it. Never again will he be able to obtain such good terms as I would have made now. He has done himself such harm by burning his towns and his capital that there is nothing more I should have asked of him. He would have to pay no dearer price than the confiscation of the English shipping. If the Poles do not rise *en masse* to defend themselves against the Russians, France has sacrificed enough for them, if I can come to a conclusion and make peace, at the same time looking after their particular interests. I am going to attack Kutusoff. If I beat him, as is probable, the Tsar runs grave risks. He can stop it to-day by a word. Who can tell what will happen in the forthcoming campaign? I have money, and more men than I need. I am about to get six thousand Cossacks; in the next campaign I shall have fifteen thousand. I am experienced in this war; my army will have experience of the country and the troops confronting them. These are incalculable advantages. If I make my winter quarters here and at Kalouga, even at Smolensk or at Witepsk, Russia will be lost. Having made here, as at Osterode,² all the sacrifices that I can be expected to make, nothing is left but for me to pursue the interests of my system, of the great political aim which I set out to attain. If the Tsar would only reflect, he

¹ Victor attacked Wittgenstein at Tcherniki on October 31st, but he was obliged to withdraw on Sienna and Czerija, which he reached on November 6th.

² February 21 to March 31, 1807. An allusion to the offers of alliance made to Russia before the Friedland campaign.

would realize that this might take him far with a man of my character, who will now have nothing more to do with him, as he has made no reply to any of my overtures. You were right," added the Emperor, "in not accepting this mission; you would have made them listen to reason."

I answered him, as on other occasions, that I should have met with no better hearing than M. Lauriston. I added that Kutusoff, burdened with heavy responsibilities, might be anxious to enter into negotiations to the end that he might extricate himself from his difficulties as soon as possible, but that I doubted whether he was authorized to do so; moreover, that all these fine phrases might merely be a sort of game to foster our hopes of a speedy settlement: in other words, to lull the Emperor into a false sense of security while he was in Moscow, since at Petersburg they realized their advantages and our difficulties.

At the words "lull" and "difficulties" the Emperor gave a start.

"What do you call our difficulties?" he asked, with an air of irritation.

But collecting himself at once, he asked with visible emotion what I actually meant by "our difficulties."

"The winter, Sire," I answered, "is a big difficulty, to begin with. The lack of stores, of horses for your artillery, of transport for your sick and wounded, the poor clothing for your soldiers. Every man must have a sheepskin, stout fur-lined gloves, a cap with ear-flaps, warm boot-socks, heavy boots to keep his feet from getting frost-bitten. You lack all this. Not a single frost-nail has been forged for the horses' shoes; how are they going to draw the guns? There is no end to what I could tell Your Majesty on this subject. Then there are your communications; the weather is still fine, but what will it be in a month, in a fortnight, perhaps in even less?"

The Emperor listened. I perceived that it was with impatience, but at least he let me speak. This time, it seemed to me, what I said with thoughts of retreat in my mind, irritated him no less than my words "lull" and "difficulties," and he was above all upset at having been found out.

"So you think I am leaving Moscow?" he demanded.

"Yes, Sire."

"That is not certain. Nowhere shall I be better off than in Moscow."

Whereupon he entered into particulars of the advantages that the city still offered by reason of the buildings yet standing, which in his opinion made it preferable to any other place. He discussed the need of provisioning, of the resources still to be found within its walls, and those already obtained. Nevertheless he went in detail into the difficulties of provisioning caused by the presence of the Cossacks; but these difficulties would be the same anywhere, so long as he had no Polish Cossacks to pit against the Russian Cossacks. He concluded by saying that, apart from the great political advantages presented by a sojourn in Moscow, the place was preferable on many grounds, if only by reason of the buildings surviving the fire. As to the Cossack attacks, he said he had means of obviating this annoyance by placing detachments of infantry in block-houses linked in a line of defence, and added that, after giving battle to Kutusoff and driving him further back, he would see to the organization of all this. He agreed that it was vexatious to have his communications disturbed, even at the very gates of headquarters, and that from this point of view it would be to our advantage to be nearer Smolensk, and thereby nearer his other corps, his supplies and reserves, while the enemy would be correspondingly weakened by being drawn away from the bases they had formed. But he observed that as this question involved both political and military aspects, all considerations had to be carefully weighed before taking any decision, and he seemed to me to be inclined to staying in Moscow.

The Emperor continually reverted to the use he would make of the Polish Cossacks in the winter; they would be supported by his infantry posts in the blockhouses and so afford a measure of tranquillity for the army. This was his favourite idea. As it was only possible to conclude peace at Moscow, he discussed all the means essential to his remaining in the city, like a man who, being convinced that a certain

step is advantageous and even necessary, and having given the matter much thought, feels that it is possible, persuades himself of its feasibility, and seeks to persuade others. On this hypothesis he spoke of establishing the army at Kalouga, of an extensive operation on that town while Moscow was left in the hands of a garrison, at least until it could be seen what the Russian Army was going to do. He complained of the slowness in raising the Polish levies, of M. de Pradt who did nothing and did not represent him, who was inconsiderate, and whose meanness and lack of tact had mishandled all the affairs of Warsaw.¹

"If I had sent Talleyrand," he added, "I should have my six thousand Cossacks, and my position would at once look different."

He attributed all his difficulties simply to the trouble caused by the Cossacks, for he had more troops than were necessary, he insisted, to fight Kutusoff and go wherever he liked.

The hardships of winter, the total lack of all precautions against cold, etc., did not enter into his calculations.

"You do not know the French," he said to me. "They will get all they need; one thing will take the place of another."

He ridiculed my observations as to shoeing the horses, asserting that our artillery and cavalry officers, and our shoeing-smiths were just as good at their job as the Russians. Several times, however, he referred to the advantage of getting in closer touch with his corps on the Dwina, but principally from the point of view of giving them an impetus which he was unable to impart from a distance. He complained that the Generals had not made the best of the means at their disposal.

The Emperor seemed to speak with confidence, even without restraint. With the exception of the Duke of Dalmatia and Marshal Saint-Cyr, none of the Generals, according to him, was capable of leading an army of 30,000 men.

¹ Napoleon wrote to Maret from Molodetchna, December 4, 1812 (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19372): "The ambassador Pradt has shown no ability whatsoever, nor even the slightest common sense."

"The Tsar Alexander," he said, "is to some extent better served than myself, for although Wittgenstein has made several blunders he has often out-manceuvred the Generals opposed to him. The Duke of Reggio is brave enough on the battlefield, but he is a mediocre General, the most incapable there is. Saint-Cyr is a better type of man, but hide-bound; he will see nothing but what is before his eyes, whereas in a system of great operations such as these everything must be worked into its proper place."

He concluded by assuring me, in a tone of conviction, that Petersburg would reply, and that in any event Kutusoff would conclude an armistice with Lauriston. This being so, he would lose all the advantages he had gained if he left Moscow, and might even prevent any reply being sent or any results obtained. To evacuate Moscow would be a confession of defeat, whereas he had been victorious in every direction. He added that the Tsar would think twice before letting him pass the winter in Moscow, whence he would be able to organize the country, for the occupation of the capital was no small matter for the Russian nobility, who were thereby deprived of their revenues while the refugee peasants were eating up the provinces to which they had drifted. The Russians could not endure this state of affairs for long; Kutusoff and his Generals knew very well that they desired peace, and these considerations prevented him from attacking Kutusoff at the moment. Anyhow, the weather was so fine that he would make his decision in some days.

"The extreme rigours of our winter do not come on in twenty-four hours," he said. "Although we are less acclimatized than the Russians, we are fundamentally more robust. We have not had autumn yet, we shall have plenty of fine days before winter sets in."

"Do not trust to that, Sire," I answered. "Winter will come like a bombshell, and you cannot be too apprehensive considering the present state of the army."

This conversation shows all too clearly the Emperor's hopes, desires and wishes; it would be superfluous to add further details. His motive for remaining in Moscow is clear, and

even why he did not immediately attack the Russian Army, which he had to defeat before undertaking any operation. He must have counted confidently on making peace, or at least on concluding an armistice, for he was aware that the Russians were receiving strong reinforcements and recovering their morale, while innumerable petty matters and the interruptions of our communications were weakening our own. It is positive, and the Emperor never varied on this point, that he was determined to attack the Russians, whether he had to withdraw, or whether he had to take up his winter quarters in Moscow or elsewhere. Victorious, he leaned towards keeping Moscow; beaten, or having won an indecisive victory, he considered it indispensable to beat Kutusoff, and felt that he was in a position to hold Smolensk. All his calculations, all his discussions with the Prince of Neuchâtel before the skirmish at Winkovo, were based on this opinion. It even seemed that the more he reflected the more he clung to Moscow. Three weeks earlier he had perhaps been more inclined to quit the city than he was now.

I will summarize the points of the great question of the moment, for it was of the utmost importance.

The Emperor laboured under an illusion as to the rigour of the winter and the consequences of spending it in Russia. He was convinced that by installing infantry posts and palisaded blockhouses, he could obviate the annoyance of Cossack attacks, whether on our line or at our rear, and he cited as an example what had been done to ensure communications in the Vendée campaign and the Chouan insurrection. He thought that the corps on the Dwina were more than sufficient to hold Wittgenstein, and even, in case of need, to cope with other circumstances by means of the reinforcements they would receive. He thought likewise about the corps at Smolensk and Schwarzenberg's Army. The great number of troops coming up from Wilna and France seemed to him more than adequate to safeguard his rear against all the Russian corps, and adequate even to supply reinforcements. He regarded the Army of Moldavia as small in numbers, and destined principally to reinforce Kutusoff who, as Commander-in-Chief, and

especially as head of a faction which the trend of events was continually strengthening, would not fail to gather reinforcements and maintain the influence that was his by reason of successes and a good position. In the event of not meeting with the success he anticipated in his attack on Kutusoff, the Emperor considered himself in a fit state to keep the field, and imagined that the temperature would allow him to do so for some time yet.

The Emperor always considered it a matter of prime importance that he should remain in Moscow, from a material point of view on account of the establishments there, and politically because the occupation of the Capital produced a moral effect that would be felt in Europe as much as in Russia. Should circumstances and causes of which he would barely admit the possibility oblige him to abandon Moscow, in no event did he contemplate retiring further than Witepsk; and this he imagined that he would be able to do easily before the rigours of winter set in. He intended to make no movement without having previously beaten Kutusoff; but should he decide to retire on Witepsk he wanted at the same time to arrange everything in Moscow, so that if necessary the winter could be passed there, and so that he could retain the means of keeping the place if he decided to hold that line. In the event of a withdrawal, he considered that he would have time and the means to withdraw the Moscow garrison when he wished to do so.

Such was the reasoning upon which the Emperor based his conduct and his prolonged stay in Moscow, waiting for a reply which never came, and could not come.

It was, I think, about October 12th that a courier bound for Paris was captured. The next day the one coming from Paris suffered the same fate. Fortunately these were the only couriers we lost during the entire campaign. Several were delayed, but thanks to the intelligence shown by the men chosen for this service they escaped the activities of the Russian scouts. The Cossacks appreciated so little the importance of this correspondence that after emptying the portmanteaux and the two portfolios in each, in search of money,

they threw away and scattered all the papers. A number of these were recovered. The army post lost three trunks of letters, only one of them from France. Most of these letters were found.

All these incidents worried the Emperor more than a great reverse would have done in other circumstances. Still nursing his favourite idea, and without considering that his repeated overtures only offered fresh evidence to the enemy of his embarrassed position, and consequently only one more reason why they should make no reply, he thought of sending Lauriston once more to Marshal Kutusoff to conclude an armistice upon which he could rely. By this means he hoped to hasten the reply which he so persistently expected from Petersburg.

All went in the best possible way with the Russians, who took every care to prolong the Emperor's fatal sense of security and foster his hopes of reaching some settlement.¹ In addition to conciliatory speeches and the repeated assertion that they were more eager for peace than we were, that this desire, voiced by the army, had been communicated to the Tsar, and that the expected reply could not be long delayed, nor other than satisfactory when it came, they had by a series of parleys established a sort of tacit armistice so as to hoodwink the King of Naples of their intentions. Even the detached parties had been less active for some days. Everything concurred to blind the King's eyes, so that he did not retire as he had been authorized to do, into Woronovo.²

Since October 3rd our troops had been ordered to concentrate, and on the 15th or 16th the Emperor seemed inclined to evacuate Moscow and move his headquarters to Witepsk, keeping Smolensk as an advanced post or, perhaps, as headquarters if he did not deem it necessary to establish himself at Witepsk to be nearer the Dwina. He complained more

¹ Report from Kutusoff to the Tsar Alexander at this time, includes the following curious phrase about the aggressors, as he called the French: "Their graves are already dug for them in the soil of this Empire." (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

² Murat had taken up his position at Winkowo, behind the Tchernitchnia, an hour's distance from Taroutino where Kutusoff was placed, to the south of Moscow.

bitterly than ever that the King of Naples was losing his cavalry. On the evening of the 14th, he ordered him to make ready for a possible attack on Kutusoff, and relying on details the King had supplied as to the state of the cavalry, daily losses, and the difficulty of finding provisions, he authorized him to take up his position at Woronovo for the time being, as he would there be covered by infantry. But the tacit armistice which had existed for some days decided the King, as I have said above, to stay where he was.

Berthier imagined that the Emperor's decision was taken, and told me so. On the whole, the Emperor seemed to have made up his mind to follow the Bieloi road,¹ which was intact. This would have the added advantage of shortening the distance by several marches, and would have enabled the army to be established before any attacks were made; for with his small corps, composed almost entirely of cavalry, Wittgenstein could not cause us any trouble without himself being wiped out.

But the Emperor soon abandoned this wise project. He said that to ensure the army being left undisturbed, and to influence public opinion, it was necessary to force back Kutusoff and defeat him before making any retrograde movement or settling into winter quarters. According to the Emperor this was the only way to prevent the enemy from harassing us, at least for some time. If the Emperor Alexander would not consider the question of peace, any other movement on the part of the French would aggravate rather than improve their situation, for if they retired without defeating Kutusoff he would probably follow them up in contact with Wittgenstein, and augment the moral effect which this withdrawal of the French would produce on the Russians. To defeat Kutusoff, either in a pitched battle or in detail, seemed to Napoleon, all things considered, an *indispensable preliminary* to any retrograde movement, if only for the blow it would strike at Russian opinion before going into winter quarters. This decision, which offered the chance of battle and glory, as well as affording a pretext for waiting some days longer for

¹ The road north of that by which he had come.

KUTUSOFF'S REPLY TO BERTHIER

the reply from Petersburg which he had so much at heart and which never arrived, was definitely taken and resolved upon.

Meanwhile the Emperor once again sent Lauriston to Russian headquarters to propose an armistice, and to ascertain whether any reply had come from Petersburg.¹ The King of Naples was instructed to forward Lauriston's despatches as rapidly as possible, for the Emperor awaited them with all the more impatience in that he realized that the season was passing, and consequently his own arrangements demanded a prompt reply. The Prince of Neuchâtel wrote in this sense to Kutusoff on the 16th, urging him to handle the war so as to keep the country in hand rather than devastate it.² He proposed certain measures to this end. On the 21st, after his success at Woronovo [Winkovo], Marshal Kutusoff replied "that a people that has not seen an enemy on their soil for three centuries is unable to make the distinction which frequent occupations and familiarity with the customs of modern warfare have established in civilized nations."³

The Emperor considered this a worthy reply, and after reading it, observed:

"These people have no wish to treat for terms. Kutusoff is courteous because he wants to finish the war, but Alexander has no such desire. He is pig-headed."

The King of Naples had already proposed this armistice

¹ Lauriston left Moscow during the evening of October 16th. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 170.)

² See Berthier's letter to Kutusoff, dated from Moscow, October 18, 1812, in the *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19277. The exact phrase is: "General Lauriston has been charged to propose to Your Highness that arrangements should be come to that would give to the war a character conformable to the established rules of warfare, and ensure measures that shall minimize the evils the country must suffer to those inevitable to a state of war." This letter, dated the 18th (not the 16th, as Caulaincourt says), was taken to Kutusoff's headquarters by Colonel Berthemy.

³ Kutusoff's reply to Berthier, dated October 9-21, 1812, is given by Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, 222. The actual words are: "I must, however, emphasize a truth of which Your Highness will undoubtedly realize the force and scope: this is, that it is difficult, however keenly one may desire to do so, to stop a nation that is embittered by all that it sees, a people who, for three hundred years have never known war within their frontiers, who are ready to immolate themselves for their country, and who are not susceptible to those distinctions of what is or what is not the usage of ordinary warfare."

desired by the Russian generals, and only refused by them because the Tsar had not authorised it. It was on this occasion that the Tsar remarked, on receiving the despatches and proposals from headquarters:

"Now is the moment when my campaign opens."

Some days later (after the affair of Woronovo) it was learned from the Russians that the Tsar had expressly forbidden the Marshal and his generals to consent to any armistice or cessation of hostilities.¹ Lauriston came back on the 16th or 17th,² while Kutusoff was preparing for the surprise of the 18th which was so cruelly to open everyone's eyes.

All this time our communications were daily becoming more difficult to obtain. Without actually operating near the army the Cossacks impeded our movements in Moscow. A fresh convoy of artillery from France lost several ammunition wagons after leaving Mojaïsk. The Cossacks blew up several; the others were recaptured. Some days previously the Emperor had given orders that the various corps should be issued with rations and biscuits for fifteen days, as though there were any means of transport to enable this to be done! He knew that there could be no means available, for even all the private carriages had been taken to serve in the convoy of wounded led by General Nansouty. This order of his caused much grumbling, and was only partially carried out. Several corps had not enough flour to fulfil such a demand. All the guns and ammunition that could be transported were parked in the Kremlin. These dispositions left no further doubt as to a move in the near future. Most people, counting on the Emperor's characteristic tenacity of purpose were convinced that he was about to attack Kutusoff at Kalouga. Some of us, but a minority, thought it portended a retreat on Smolensk.

¹ Alexander's letter to Kutusoff in reply to Prince Wolkonsky's mission to Petersburg with the proposals transmitted by Lauriston, is dated from Petersburg, October 9-21, 1812. This letter is given by Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 224. It concludes by emphasizing that for the moment no proposal from the enemy can bind Alexander "to bring the war to an end and thus turn him from his sacred duty of avenging his injured country."

² Lauriston returned to Moscow on the evening of the 17th. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 171.)

THE WINKOVO SKIRMISH

While searching for food and wine some soldiers discovered cellars in which a prodigious quantity of furs had been concealed, and all who could afford it bought them. The bearskins were too costly for junior officers,¹ but I purchased one for a few napoleons.

By October 18th everything was ready to move on Kalouga on the 20th. The Emperor had decided to leave part of his Household at Moscow.² He had given me instructions when, at one in the afternoon, as he was holding a review after the parade,³ he received news of the King of Naples's defeat at Winkovo. The Emperor immediately determined to press forward his own movements and advanced everything by a day.⁴ The entire Household and all his carriages were ordered to start, and even as many of the sick as could be moved were included. The Emperor's first words to the Prince of Neuchâtel and to those to whom he issued orders in person were:

"We must wipe out the effects of this surprise. It must not be said in France that a check like this has forced us to retire. What folly of the King! No one takes proper care. This upsets all our plans; it spoils everything. The honour of our arms must be re-established on the battlefield. We will see if the Russians carry matters off there as they did in this surprise. Anyhow, it looks as if the King has done them some damage, for they dare not follow him. In any event, we must march to his help and avenge him."

The King had lost several pieces of artillery, a number of excellent and gallant officers had been killed,⁵ others taken prisoner and many wounded. He lost a number of men taken

¹ This phrase is employed to distinguish an officer in command of a single unit from a general officer, or one commanding a collection of troops.

² See *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19286, for the Emperor's orders to Mortier, who was to remain at Moscow with the Delaborde Division of the Young Guard, the Carrere Brigade, and some artillery.

³ At noon the Emperor reviewed Ney's 3rd Corps. The news of the battle at Winkovo was brought him by Béranger, aide-de-camp to the King of Naples.

⁴ Cf. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19284, Napoleon to Berthier, Moscow, October 18, 1812.

⁵ Notably General Dery, Murat's aide-de-camp, and the Polish General Fiszer, Chief of the Staff of the 5th Corps (Poniatowski).

prisoner, and the greater part of his own carriages and those of his army corps.

During the evening the Emperor communicated to us the following particulars.

As usual, our troops took no precautions, and reconnaissances were made carelessly. Having observed for some time our habits and the line of our march, the Russians harassed our troops even less than usual while preparing the surprise that was to prove so fatal. By the appointed day they had collected several divisions in readiness for the projected operation. Cossacks, artillery and infantry were concealed in woods, very near our position but not properly examined by our scouts.¹ Supported by Bagowouth's Corps,² Platow seized the moment when the greater part of our men were out foraging, and his brisk attack on Sébastiani's camp threw us into such disorder that the artillery carriages and a large number of men were taken. In the first moments of excitement, indeed, great difficulty was experienced in rallying even small companies in the various regiments. During the preceding day and night the whole Russian Army had crossed the Nara over bridges built a league above Taroutino. Bagowouth, whose infantry had made their way into our bivouacs, firing on our brave lads as they ran to their horses to join their companions, was supported by Strogonoff and backed up by Ostermann, and together they made for the defile³ which was the only line of retreat for the French. It would have been the end of Sébastiani and all the artillery if the King of Naples, at the head of the Carabineers, had not hurled himself on the Russians and stopped their column. Taken by surprise, in his turn, Bagowouth, who had no help from Strogonoff or Ostermann, who advanced slowly instead of dashing to the head of the defile, was obliged to halt and reform his men. A pitched battle ensued, and this gave the King time to pass the defile, and once order was established, to engage in a battle which ended in even honours. Platow, who for a time

¹ The attack was made at five o'clock in the morning.

² Bagowouth commanded the Russian 2nd Corps.

³ From Spaskaplia, two leagues behind the French lines.

had made himself master of the defile, was not supported and was driven off by Claparède¹ and Latour-Maubourg.² Bago-wouth was killed.

The King carried out his retreat in good order and without annoyance from the Russians, of whom only a few corps had crossed the Tchernitchnia. Kutusoff had only intended this skirmish to be one of outposts, a snatched advantage. Having obtained it, he contented himself with this small success and did not trouble to risk his advantage for greater things. Unwilling to run the hazards of a battle, he halted and resumed his position on the Nara, leaving only Platow, supported by some regular troops, to pursue the King of Naples. With soldiers of different calibre, serving under a different chief, few of our men would have escaped. Prodigies of valour were performed.

To the particulars of this affair just given, I will add certain details narrated to us by the Emperor as to Kutusoff's position, together with Napoleon's reflections on the various reports that he received.

Kutusoff remained in his position behind what were known as the Entrenchments of Taroutino, or rather behind the Nara and the Istia. The Entrenchments of Taroutino were doubtless so-called because they guarded the bridge in the village of Taroutino where the road crossed the Nara. The King of Naples occupied Winkowo with the Claparède Division and a line of posts on the Tchernitchnia, a small river, or rather stream. To right and left were the cavalry, Poniatowski on the left, slightly in the rear, Sébastiani in the first line, Saint-Germain with his reserve,³ in the second line, Defour's infantry⁴ and Latour-Maubourg's Cavalry also in reserve.

The Emperor blamed the King, and especially General Sébastiani who had suffered the surprise, for not having sent outposts or continual patrols into the small wood that dominated the position at General Sébastiani's right; for it was from

¹ General Claparède commanded the Vistula Division of the Imperial Guard.

² Commanding the 4th Cavalry Corps.

³ 1st Division of Heavy Cavalry (1st Cavalry Corps).

⁴ General François Marie Dufour, born at Fruges (Pas-de-Calais), December 5, 1769, died at Lille, April 14, 1815. He was General of Brigade, January 19, 1807, General of Division, March 4, 1813, and Commanded a Brigade of Ney's 3rd Corps.

this position that the Russians, more alert and active than ourselves on this occasion, were able, as the Emperor said, to observe all Sébastiani's movements, even what went on in his own quarters.

The Emperor was all the more displeased that he should have to blame his generals for having been taken by surprise, because this same place had been attacked by the Cossacks early in October and from the same wood; this, he considered, should not have escaped the notice of those in command. The Emperor did not fail to reproach himself for having stayed in Moscow without inspecting this position.

"It means that I must see everything with my own eyes," he said. "I cannot rely upon the King. He trusts in his own bravery; he leaves things to his generals and they are careless. The King performs prodigies of valour. Without his presence of mind and courage everything would have been lost and himself jeopardized had the Russians been better led. Bagowouth was not backed up in his vigorous attack. Strogonoff spoiled the whole operation by wavering, and by being too far off at the decisive moment."

If this surprise attack was proof of our lack of watchfulness, the way we fought, although far fewer in numbers, must have shown the Russians that fatigue and privations had by no means diminished our courage. Cavalry and artillery were alike worn out; the horses were kept alive only on what could be obtained by somewhat aimless foraging at a distance, and every day this became harder and more dangerous, as the men were obliged to go further afield. The King had, it is true, at least a hundred guns, but they were badly horsed and weakly manned.

The Emperor was greatly annoyed by this affair, above all by the losses suffered by the cavalry, who were already so much reduced in strength. It also made a very lively impression on the army. The entire success of the enemy was attributed to the Cossacks, whose activities engaged only too much of our attention. Our men were doubtless very brave, but they were careless and lacking in vigilance, which arose as much from their character as from lack of order and discipline. This was frequently the subject of serious reflection

on the part of the Prince of Neuchâtel and other generals about the Emperor. There were too many young officers in the corps. Dashing courage was valued above all else; method, foresight, and even a love of discipline were underestimated. At all his reviews the Emperor made everything of audacity, courage and luck; for success was essential.

Those who organized, trained the men at the bases, and kept things going, obtained no recognition if they were not in the Grand Army or had not taken part in such-and-such a battle. No commanding officer was ever brought to book for the losses occasioned by his negligence, his lack of order and discipline, even if two-thirds of his force had been wasted from these causes. If he led a gallant charge at the head of the hundred men left him on the day of battle, he obtained whatever he desired, and nothing was given to the brave lieutenant-colonel who, after fighting his twenty campaigns, was back in the depot organizing and drilling the detachments that were to reinforce the army. He was forgotten, because he had had no chance of contributing any brilliant deeds to the successful affair of the moment. Far be it from me to say that the Emperor did not reward the old soldiers. There are too many instances to prove, on the contrary, that they were the objects of his solicitude when they remained with the army or were invalided out; but so long as they remained in the depots, even in the interests of the service, they obtained no promotion until they returned to the fighting line.

Undoubtedly this system had the advantage of making all officers anxious to get back to the front, but it was really detrimental to the service and to the best service, for the depots were not given to the most capable men. Any honest investigator who would compare the conditions of his corps at the beginning of the campaign with its state at the end, seeking the causes of loss and wastage, would certainly find that it was not the enemy's guns which had done most damage to our cavalry. The marches were too long; many necessities were lacking; few non-commissioned officers had experience, and most of the troopers had received little or no drilling. The fine state in which some corps were maintained

to the very last moment, compared with the disorder and destruction suffered by others with no longer length of service, proves that our greatest foe was indiscipline, and the disorders that followed in its train originated in the negligence of the commanding officers.

The Emperor had altogether 715 saddle and draught horses in Russia to draw the wagons loaded with provisions of all kinds as well as a great outfit of tents. As his headquarters were always the last to arrive, and that invariably in a place already laid waste by reason of the whole army having previously passed by, it was necessary to carry everything with us or seek what we needed from a distance.¹ I have, therefore, had experience of what can be done by method and care in supplementing the provender both in kind, quality,

¹ It must also be observed that the various administrations did not furnish a thousand pounds of bread, a hundred trusses of hay, nor a particle of oats to the Emperor's Household throughout the campaign. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

The composition and organization of the Emperor's military train during the Russian Campaign were regulated by a decree of January 15, 1812. The service, under the orders of the Master of the Horse, comprised: (1) a light service; (2) expedition service; (3) one for heavy baggage; (4) saddle-horses.

The light service consisted of six canteen carts, each drawn by a pair of mules, four light tents, each carried by a mule, two *mattres-d'hôtel*, two valets, three cooks, four footmen, eight grooms, two harness-makers or smiths, all mounted on horses or mules. Besides these there were two pack-mules with the office furniture and pharmacy, two small forges drawn by four horses, and two light vehicles for provisions.

The expedition service comprised the light carriages for the use of His Majesty and suite, the tents of the Imperial quarters, the mobile staff, part of the office, light baggage; in all 26 vehicles drawn by 160 horses.

The heavy baggage service comprised 24 vehicles drawn by 240 horses. Among these were the Emperor's travelling coach (*berline*), two following *berlines*, a reserve *calèche*, two carriages for the secretaries, maps and documents, a wardrobe carriage, two provision carts, eight wagons for bread, office, cellar, stores, linen, plate, etc. The saddle-horse service comprised ten brigades of thirteen horses each, namely: two battle-chargers and a riding-horse for the Emperor, one for the Master of the Horse, one for the page on duty, one for the equerry on duty, one for the surgeon, one for the groom, one for the mameluke, one for the guide, three for under-grooms.

The effective total, including the reserves, was kept up at 52 carriages and 650 horses and mules.

The Imperial camp was composed thus: The Emperor's tent, that of the high officials, of the aides-de-camp, of the orderly officers, of the officers on duty, sergeant-majors, quartermasters and secretaries, in short of the entire suite. The Emperor's tent was composed of two reception rooms, an office, and a bedroom, the whole carried in a single wagon. The Prince of Neuchâtel's camp had to be installed at a hundred yards' distance from the Emperor's.

and quantity. All persons attached to headquarters were in the same plight, but as none had more than a few horses it was much easier to find and provide fodder. It is also an admitted fact that the mounts of the Emperor and his suite made much longer and faster rides than other horses. Yet on reaching Wilna on December 8th, during the retreat, only eighty horses had been lost out of the 715 with which we had started the campaign. The mortality was not noticeable until after the crossing of the Niemen, and especially after our arrival at Insterburg, which proves that the losses were occasioned by a too abundant supply furnished without the precautions that should have been taken after rigorous privations and excessive fatigue. A few well-advised steps would have prevented this mortality.

I enter into these particulars in order to answer in advance all the fables that have been told, and that will yet be told, as to the effects of the cold, the lack of provisions, and so forth. During the retreat horses fell and lay by the roadside chiefly because they were not properly shod for crossing the ice, and having once fallen and vainly attempted to rise, they ended by lying where they fell, and were cut up for food before they were even dead. With frost-nails, and the exercise of a little care, the greater number would certainly have been saved.

Before leaving the subject of Moscow it is essential that I should say something about its administration. The Duke of Treviso had been charged with the government of the city. He succeeded Count Durosnel, and M. de Lesseps, formerly Consul-General at Petersburg, had been placed at the head of the administration.¹ This estimable gentleman was on his way back to Paris with his wife and eight children when a courier caught him up as he was disembarking at Danzig, and handed him imperative orders to proceed at once to Imperial headquarters, then at the gates of Moscow. Despite his urgent request to be excused all duties, after a week the Emperor appointed him *Intendant*. This excellent man did all that he could, and like the Governor, put a stop to many evils, among

¹ See p. 246.

them the issue of false paper, the theft of many small sums, and the destruction of such archives as had been saved from the fire. It was the honourable and worthy Lesseps who raised more opposition than anyone else to the proclamation for the liberation of the serfs; it was he who collected, sheltered, nourished, and in fact saved, quite a number of unfortunate men, women and children, whose houses had been burned, and who were wandering like ghosts amid the ruins of the Capital. On this occasion he showed that he had not forgotten the thirty years' hospitality he had met with in Russia, more especially between Kamchatka and Petersburg when M. de La Pérouse, with whom he had landed, sent him with despatches to France.¹ I was an eyewitness of this estimable man's efforts; he often confided in me his disappointments and all the sorrow that so much distressed him. It is only right that I should render justice to the honourable sentiments that have been his invariable guide.

The Emperor had caused a proclamation to be prepared giving the serfs their freedom. This was early in October. Some dregs of the lowest classes of society, and a few fire-brands (German artisans who made themselves these peoples' mouthpieces and egged them on), raised an outcry and, incited by a few, demanded that this should be done. These men even carried their demand to the Emperor, announcing that hopes of freedom were germinating in the heads of the peasants, and that instead of finding himself surrounded by enemies, the Emperor would have millions of auxiliaries if he conceded this measure. Yet was not this measure radically opposed to his acknowledged principles? He felt, and some time later observed to me, that the prejudice and fanaticism excited against us in the minds of the populace would prove a great obstacle, for some time at least, and that consequently

¹ In 1785 M. de Lesseps had been appointed as Interpreter in La Pérouse's expedition. He accompanied it as far as Kamchatka where, on September 29, 1787, he was ordered to proceed to France with the records of the expedition. He reached Petersburg on September 22, 1788, after a dangerous journey. He was presented to Louis XVI at Versailles on the following October 18th.

he would have to bear all the odium of such a measure without reaping the benefits.¹

The disorder and pillage which inevitably followed our forced marches had caused the initial damage and alienated the peasants. The fires that had been so skilfully started, for which the peasants blamed the French; the different language; the crusade preached against us by the Russian clergy—all these combined to show us to these superstitious people as barbarians who had come to overturn their altars, steal their goods, ravish their women and children and lead them into captivity. And so they fled from us as from wild beasts.

Time would have been essential if we were to establish relations with the inhabitants. Agreement needed an exchange of views. As matters stood, there was no one to discuss with. The Russian Government had shown its wisdom in sending away the inhabitants before the French arrived. In these grave circumstances it can be said that they lacked neither talent nor forethought. This being the case a proclamation which, apart from anything else, was not in accordance with the Emperor's views, could have served no purpose; for it would have had no effect, and would have imparted to the war a revolutionary character which would have been highly unseemly in a monarch who, with reason, prided himself on having restored social order to Europe. So the preparation of this proclamation was merely a threat; it deceived nobody who really knew the Emperor.

It was one of those many methods tried by him to see if the threat would produce any effect. He wished, if possible, to intimidate. These were thunderbolts, in which he showed only the lightning and kept back the thunder. He left nothing untried to bring about the negotiations which he desired, but this proclamation was not a device that entered into his political scheme, although he spoke as if it were a definite project.

One day the Emperor even said to me:

"Like you, Lesseps is against emancipation. Yet there

¹ See Napoleon's reply to the address of the Senate, December 20, 1812. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19389.)

are some, who know as much about the Russians as you, who think differently. You are opposed to it because it would not be playing fairly against your friend Alexander. But those fires were not fair either. They would fully justify reprisals. Otherwise, I think exactly as you do about this emancipation. It is impossible to tell where such a measure would lead. Up to the present, except that Alexander has burned his towns to prevent us occupying them, we have played the game by each other. There have been no offensive proclamations, no insults. He is wrong not to come to terms now that we have met on the duelling ground. We should soon be in agreement and remain the best of friends."

According to orders given immediately on the news of the battle at Woronovo,¹ the Duke of Treviso was entrusted with the difficult task of concentrating on the Kremlin for the purpose of holding Moscow. He had the Delaborde Division of the Young Guard, which had recently arrived,² and some unmounted cavalry.³ The Major-General enjoined the Duke of Abrantès to be prepared to make a movement between the 20th and the 22nd, and the regiments on the march were ordered to halt and remain wherever they were.⁴ He ordered the evacuation of the wounded, but there were no means of transport. The arms in the depot established in the Kolotskoie⁵ Abbey had to be destroyed. Between those dates General Baraguay d'Hilliers was to take the greater part of his forces from Smolensk to Yelnia.⁶

¹ Winkovo. After this affair Murat retired upon Woronovo.

² This Division, at first detained at Smolensk, on August 28th received orders to rejoin the army. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19152 and 19164. Napoleon to Berthier, April 27th and September 1st.)

³ *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19285 and 19286. Napoleon to Berthier and to Mortier, October 18th.

⁴ Junot and the 8th Corps were at Mojaïsk preserving the army communications.

⁵ After the battle of the Moskowa the Emperor installed a depot of artillery and cavalry in the villages round the Abbey of Kolotskoie, situated on the Smolensk-Borodino road, and two leagues in front of the latter village. The Abbey itself was turned into a hospital for such of the wounded as could not be moved. Cf. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19189. Napoleon to Berthier, Mojaïsk, September 10, 1812.

⁶ Cf. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19281. Napoleon to Berthier, Moscow, September 17th. Yelnia is 22 leagues from Moscow on the Kalouga road. This Division, given to Baraguay, formerly Governor of Smolensk, had been formed on October 6th, with the Illyrian Regiment and various marching units.

COMPOSITION OF FRENCH ARMY

I ought to state that our army had received few reinforcements at Moscow, only two or three regiments and the Delaborde division which I have already mentioned, as well as the Pino Italian division.¹ The Emperor had left all his reinforcements on the lines of communication or had given them to the corps on the Dwina.

Our army was composed thus:

	<i>Infantry.</i>	<i>Cavalry.</i>	<i>Artillery.</i>
Guard	17,000	4,500	112 guns
1st Corps	27,000	1,400	130 "
3rd Corps	9,400	850	66 "
4th Corps	23,500	1,600	88 "
5th Corps	4,600	850	45 "
8th Corps	2,000	760	32 "
Dismounted Cavalry . .	4,000	—	—
Cavalry Reserve . . .	—	4,800	60 "
Total	<u>87,500</u>	<u>14,760</u>	<u>533 guns</u> ²

To these must be added the *gendarmérie*, the men at the parks, the engineers, the coach- and stable-men, and the ambulance men. These last amounted to some 8000.

Kutusoff, on the other hand, had absorbed all the levies, filled up his regiments, and reinforced himself with new corps and a considerable force of cavalry, notably Cossacks from the Don and other provinces. He had even concentrated all the infantry detachments originally placed at the disposal of the skirmishers round Moscow, as well as those with Wintzingeroode who covered the Petersburg and Dwina roads. As no prisoners were made, and no spy ventured to penetrate the Russian lines, we were entirely ignorant of what was happening and the Emperor obtained no information whatsoever.

¹ General Pino, who commanded the 15th Division (Italians and Dalmatians, 4th Corps, Eugène), had been left behind at Kamen and then at Inkowo. On August 23rd he was ordered to rejoin the 4th Corps.

² Amounting to 102,260 men and 533 guns.

CHAPTER V

THE RETREAT

1. *From Moscow to Krasnoë*

To return to Moscow: the Emperor and the Guard did not leave there until about noon on the 19th.¹ Then, since the successive reports of the King of Naples confirmed that the enemy had retired, the Emperor took with him his whole establishment. Many refugees followed the army: and we met on the road many of the wounded from the encounter at Worontovo, of which the Emperor only now heard the details when already on the march. Among the wounded was Prince Charles de Beauvau, an officer in the carabineers,² whose thigh had been broken by a lance-thrust. He was lying on a *teleg*, which is a small Russian four-wheeled cart, and was going to Moscow to be bled. In spite of the discomforts and sufferings of his condition this unfortunate young man maintained admirable calm and courage. He smiled as though his wound caused him more pride than pain. Being confident that we should never return to Moscow, which might be the scene of yet more misfortune for him, I asked the Comte de Turenne, since I could not myself leave the Emperor, to hurry after M. de Beauvau, turn him back in his journey, and tell him to go to headquarters, from which we were then not more than a league distant. Meanwhile I asked permission of the Emperor to have him put in one

¹ Castellane (*Journal*, I, 175) says the Emperor left Moscow in the middle of the morning. Denniéc (*Itinéraire*, 190) says it was at nine o'clock. Napoleon was marching against Kutusoff.

² Charles-Just-François-Victurnien, Prince de Beauvau and de Craon, born at Haroué (Meurthe) on March 7, 1793, was the son of Prince de Beauvau, the Emperor's Chamberlain. The four wounds he received at Winkovo compelled him to retire from the army. He was made senator by Napoleon III on January 26, 1852, and died at Paris on March 15, 1864.

of his carriages. This he granted immediately, urging me to take good care of him. It was the patience and control of this young man which saved him.¹ Two days later I was able by good fortune to bring him again into the company of M. de Mailly, son of the Marshal and wounded in the same encounter.² We brought him to Wilna, and from there they returned safely to Paris.

We slept at the manor-house of Troitskoie³ and stayed there during the whole of the 20th for better concentration, many men and transports having fallen behind. It was here the Emperor finally decided to abandon Moscow, being forced to this by the losses incurred at Woronovo, the reports of the state of our cavalry, and the realization that the Russians would not come to terms. He was still determined, however, to attack Kutusoff; and to that end he quickened the movement of troops. It was his intention, if his success were such as he hoped, to push beyond Kalouga and destroy the ordnance establishment at Toula, which was the most important in all Russia: and in any case to direct his forces upon Smolensk, which he wished to make his principal outpost. The Duke of Treviso was ordered to evacuate Moscow on the 23rd if he did not in the meantime receive other orders. And he was to make ready for blowing up the Kremlin and the barracks.⁴ The King of Naples reported that the Russians, having themselves suffered notable losses at Winkovo, had made no energetic pursuit of him as far as the Motscha: and

¹ His thigh, which had been broken by the thrust of a lance, was set at Troitskoie on October 20th, by Yvan, the Emperor's surgeon. "He bore the operation with great courage." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 173.)

² Adrien-Auguste-Almaric de Mailly-Nesle, born at Paris, February 19, 1792, died at the château of La Roche-Mailly (Sarthe) on July 1, 1878. He was the son, not of the Marshal de Mailly, but of Major-General de Mailly-Nesle, who was a deputy to the Estates General. On leaving St. Cyr in 1811 he had been appointed sub-lieutenant in the 2nd Regiment of Carabineers. After his return to France, he was orderly officer to General Durosnel, then to the Duc de Feltre, and lastly, at the time of the Restoration, aide-de-camp to the Duc de Berry. He was made a peer of France on August 17, 1815, but in 1830 he refused the oath to Louis-Philippe and ceased to sit in the Chamber.

³ "A mean manor-house," says Castellane (*Journal*, I, 173). It is on the road from Moscow to Kalouga.

⁴ *Correspondance de Napoléon*, No. 19292: Napoleon to Berthier, Troitskoie, October 20, 1912. The fire was to be started, according to this order, on the 22nd or 23rd, at two in the morning.

that Kutusoff was withdrawn within his entrenchments at Taroutino. A few days later these reports were fully confirmed.¹ Several detachments of Cossacks appeared on our flank, but did not venture to cross our line of march.

I had made arrangements, by sending out detachments, so that the couriers from Paris should come direct to us from the second relay station before Moscow. The Cossacks, however, controlled that point and delayed the couriers, so that none reached us for three days. As usual, this worried and annoyed the Emperor more than I can express. On the second day he said to me:

"I see it will be absolutely essential to be in closer touch with my reserves. It will be useless to drive off Kutusoff and force him to evacuate Kalouga and his entrenchments: the Cossacks will still interfere with my communications so long as I haven't my Poles."

In this connection the Emperor complained of the action of M. de Bassano and M. de Pradt, sparing neither. Against the first he brought up the Russo-Turkish peace and the Swedish alliance; and attributing all his present difficulties, and any that might arise from them, to the lack of foresight, the incompetence, and the negligence of his minister and ambassador. The Emperor expressed the same view to the Prince of Neuchâtel, and also reverted to the topic with me, on our way to the manor of Ignatiiewo,² where we spent the night of the 21st.

Both these conversations led me to think that the Emperor had at last realized the absolute necessity of retreat, although he would not yet admit that he had decided on it. He still wavered, and some compelling force or irresistible fatality inclined him still to regret Moscow, and to go back there, buoying himself up with the hope of some conspicuous success and an armistice, or negotiations, by which everything could be settled. So at least I suspected from what the Prince of Neuchâtel told me and from the dispositions made on the

¹ Principally by Colonel Berthemy, who had carried to Kutusoff the letter from Berthier mentioned earlier, and had found him still holding his position at Taroutino. Berthemy had returned to the Imperial quarters on the 22nd.

² Between the two roads from Moscow to Kalouga.

THE DEPARTURE FROM MOSCOW

22nd, the day on which the headquarters were established at Fominskoie.¹ The weather was bad and the ground so sodden with rain that we had great difficulty in making Borowsk in two marches across country.² The draught horses were finished, the cold of the night being too much for them. We already had to abandon a number of ammunition-cases and transports. It was on the evening of the previous day that the Prince of Neuchâtel told me how for the first time the Emperor, in discussing the army, its movements, and the possible issues, made no reference to his former project: the project of holding Moscow while we occupied the fertile province of Kalouga, as the Emperor called it. This province must have been the apparent rather than the real object of our expedition; for, in the reflections he was led to make, in talking with the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself, by the delay of the couriers, there was as yet no indication of a settled plan.

Although he had already, on the 20th, sent an order to the Duke of Treviso to be in motion by the 23rd, and to move towards Mojaïsk, it was really the losses incurred in the march on Borowsk, the cold of the night, and the manifest plight of his cavalry and artillery, which opened his eyes and completely decided him that he must evacuate Moscow. Meanwhile the Emperor continued to direct all his forces against Kutusoff, who was withdrawn, as I said, within his entrenchments at Taroutino and learned of our movements only on the 23rd. The Emperor was more than ever set upon driving Kutusoff from his position and forcing him to an engagement, not wishing it to be thought that the unfortunate skirmish at Winkovo had compelled him to retire. At no matter what cost, there must be some incident in the bulletin to balance the defeat of the King of Naples and prevent Kutusoff from flattering himself that our retreat was the immediate consequence.

¹ On the road from Moscow to Kalouga by Borowsk. The Emperor arrived at Fominskoie on the 22nd, an hour after midday and remained there until nine on the morning of the 23rd.

² The Emperor, in order to conceal his movements from Kutusoff, had decided to cross from the old road to Kalouga on to the new by using a road running diagonally. Borowsk is on the new road, which runs also through Malo-Jaroslawetz.

The belated couriers arrived,¹ but only to inform us that a body of Cossacks, together with a great number of peasants armed and organized as a militia, were cutting off our communications beyond Ghjat: and that the range of this complication appeared to be spreading. A month earlier I had directed the officer in command of each relay post to make a note of what was going on in his district on the covering sheet of the despatches, where the time of arrival and departure were always entered. These reports from the road I passed to the Emperor daily, and he used to read them before anything else. At this time they indicated movements of peasants and the presence of Cossacks at every stage; and they made a great impression on the Emperor, who said to me, as early as the 21st:

"We shall be without news from France: but the worst of it is that France will have no news of us."

He instructed me to advise anyone writing home to write with great discretion on account of the risks of transit.

The Emperor reached Borowsk on the 23rd. This town had suffered severely. In spite of the very bad weather, in the afternoon he reconnoitred the neighbourhood of the town and the banks of the river² for a good distance out. He was on the point of setting out on a further advance, in accordance with the information he received of the enemy's movements, when a further report decided him to stay there. It was not until the 24th that he went forward, in the morning, to within a quarter of a league of Malo-Jaroslawetz where Delzons's division had been fighting since daybreak against Doctorov's corps.³ While waiting for the arrival of the

¹ The auditor, Joly de Fleury, bringing the portfolio from Paris, reached the Emperor on the evening of the 21st, at Ignatiowo.

² The river Protva.

³ On the 23rd Napoleon had sent Prince Eugène to Borowsk, with Delzons's, Broussier's and Pino's divisions, the Italian Royal Guard, and Grouchy's cavalry. Eugène sent Delzons's (15th) division forward to Malo-Jaroslawetz. Arriving in the neighbourhood very late, Delzons found the bridge over the Luja cut, and put two battalions across to the other bank to occupy the town. On the morning of the 24th, Doctorov attacked these two battalions and dislodged them. Delzons crossed the now mended bridge and entered Malo. Doctorov returned to the attack and broke Delzons's division, which was driven back. It was at this point that the General was killed with three bullets. The fight swayed back again on

Viceroy, Delzons accomplished marvels. The Viceroy hurried to his support as soon as he knew how much superior the forces were by which he was engaged; but Delzons was killed in the midst of his men.¹

General Guilleminot² took his place and again joined battle. Like the experienced soldier he was, he occupied and fortified a church and two houses which flanked our defence and which prevented the Russians, although they were greatly superior in numbers, from passing beyond those points in their different attacks. These fortifications gave Broussier's division,³ the leading division of the 4th Army, time to come up and relieve him. At the same time Kutusoff's advance-guard came up with Doctorov, and the fresh troops put in on both sides not only made the engagement brisker but turned it into a battle. The 4th Army held its ground gallantly, in spite of the advantages of the Russian position, which dominated all our attacking points. In addition they were greatly superior to us in numbers and artillery. The Italians decided the day in our favour, rivalling the French in daring; and there was need of this gallant rivalry for overcoming all our difficulties. In the end, however, we held the town and the strategic points.

The Emperor, who arrived by eleven o'clock, ordered the Prince of Eckmühl to quicken his march and move to the right of Prince Eugène, whom the Guard were also ordered to support. The 1st Army went into the line about two o'clock.

the entry of Broussier's division. Malo-Jaroslawetz was taken and re-taken seven times by the French, in whose hands it ultimately remained, thanks to a final charge by Pino's division and the Italian Royal Guard.

¹ Alexis-Joseph Delzons, born at Aurillac on March 26, 1775, entered the army as a volunteer in the Aurillac National Guard on June 30, 1791. He was given the command of a brigade on April 27, 1801, and of a division on February 15, 1811.

² Armand Charles Guilleminot, born at Dunkirk (Nord) on March 2, 1774, died at Bade on March 14, 1840. He was made second-lieutenant on July 23, 1792, and Brigadier-General on July 19, 1808. He was not appointed to a division until May 28, 1815. During the Russian campaign he had been appointed Chief-of-Staff to Prince Eugène. In 1815 he was Chief-of-Staff to the Duc de Berry, then after the second restoration, Chief-of-Staff to Davout, and, in 1823, to the Duc d'Angoulême. He was made a peer of France on October 9, 1823, and Ambassador to Constantinople from 1824-1831. After the death of Delzons, Eugène sent Guilleminot to take command of the 13th Division.

³ 14th Division (4th Army).

We could see perfectly the movements of the Russians, and expected that Kutusoff would take full advantage of his very strong position¹ to block our advance and himself take the offensive; but in the event the 4th Army was enough. Davout was hardly engaged. We had at least 4000 men put out of action, and a remarkable number of Russians were killed. That night and the following day, together with the Emperor, I went over the battle-ground most carefully.

Some Cossacks appeared that evening on the right of Ghorodnia, where headquarters had been established.² They were thought to be a party that were out of their road and would blunder into our outposts. We paid less attention to them than we might have done, because about noon in the same district, but on the left of the road, we had chased off some new Cossacks wearing crosses on their caps. They were mounted troops founded on the model of the Don Cossacks, and named after the provinces that provided them. The general opinion was that Kutusoff might have better defended his position. For our part, we had to leave it in the hands of a small rear-guard.

We blamed him for sacrificing a good number of men, only to be beaten in the end, and fail of his object. For since he defended his position, he must have intended to hold it at least till nightfall. The truth is that Kutusoff, having learnt of the Emperor's movements only on the 23rd, was taken by surprise; and the successive bodies of troops which arrived later to support Doctorov were only put into action to cover the retreat of his army upon Juchnow. For he was unwilling to run the risks of a pitched battle.

The Emperor heard these details on the following day from a staff officer of Doctorov's army who had been taken prisoner. We also learned from him that Doctorov was sent by Kutusoff to Borowsk on the 23rd; but as soon as he dis-

¹ "Malo-Jaroslawetz stands on heights at the foot of which the River Luja runs through a marshy bed. The French, coming from Moscow, had to cross the river, then climb the heights, and maintain themselves in Malo-Jaroslawetz. The Russians, marching on the other side of the river, had merely to enter the town." (*Thiers*, XIV, 476.)

² They were in a weaver's hut near the main road from Moscow to Kalouga.

covered our advance (he found us already in possession of Borowsk) he moved as fast as he could to Malo-Jaroslavetz. There again he found Delzons's division in possession; but it was too weak to resist him. Doctorov's movements seemed so hurried that Kutusoff's staff officers went to him one after another, urging him to make more haste. They said boldly that the Commander-in-Chief was receiving only the news of the French advance. This officer gave us many other particulars, even about the growing disinclination of Alexander for any negotiation, and about the orders he had given on that point. To the officer who brought him Kutusoff's first despatch, containing an account of M. de Lauriston's mission and proposals, he replied: "This is where my campaign begins." These particulars and others have been written in this journal under their own date.

Two army corps were drawn up beyond the town; but the roads were so broken up that only one section of the artillery had been able, and that with difficulty, to reach their position. The Emperor moved back to spend the night¹ in a hut near the bridge at Ghorodnia, a small hamlet one league from Malo-Jaroslavetz. We were nearly all of us camped in the open. The Viceroy's success had not achieved our object. We held the field, but Kutusoff gave us the slip. Our situation was therefore unchanged; and the army was not in a position to pursue the enemy. Moreover, the time of year did not allow of any further delay in the plan of settling into winter quarters. It was more than ever essential to come to some decision.

The Emperor spent the night in receiving reports, issuing orders, and, on this occasion, discussing his difficulties with the Prince of Neuchâtel. He sent for me several times, and also for Duroc and the Duke of Istria, and discussed matters with us, but without reaching any decision. Should he follow Kutusoff, who, having abandoned an impregnable position, had probably eluded us? And what route should he take to Smolensk if he did not find the enemy drawn up beyond Malo-Jaroslavetz? He had to make up his mind; and the course which drew the Emperor away from his enemy, whose

¹ The night of 24-25 October, 1812.

measure he so much wanted to take, was always the one that came hardest to him.

An hour before daybreak¹ the Emperor sent for me again. We were alone. He seemed very much preoccupied, and he seemed to need the relief of giving vent to the thoughts which lay so heavy on him.

"Things are getting serious," he said. "I beat the Russians every time, and yet never reach an end."

After a quarter of an hour of silence, during which he walked to and fro in his small shelter, the Emperor went on:

"I'm going to find out for myself whether the enemy are drawing up for battle, or whether they are retreating, as everything suggests. That devil Kutusoff will never join battle! Fetch the horses, let's be off!"

As he spoke he picked up his hat to go. The Duke of Istria and the Prince of Neuchâtel, who luckily happened to enter just as the Emperor was going, joined me in persuading him to agree to wait until dawn. They pointed out that it was very dark, and he would reach the outposts before it was light enough to see; and that, as the Guard had taken up their positions by night, no one was certain where the corps lay.

The Emperor, however, was resolved upon going, until one of the Viceroy's aides-de-camp arrived to announce that nothing could be seen of the enemy but the fires of some Cossacks; and that some peasants and soldiers who had just been taken confirmed the news of their retreat. These particulars decided the Emperor to wait; but half an hour later his impatience drove him to start. Dawn was hardly showing, and three-quarters of a mile from headquarters we found ourselves face to face with some Cossacks, belonging to a troop of which the greater part, who were ahead of us, set upon an artillery park where they heard some guns moving. They carried off several pieces.

It was still so dark that we were warned only by their shouts, and were entangled with several before we could see them. It was so unexpected to find them among the lines

¹ October 25th.

where our Guard were bivouacked that (I must admit) we paid little heed to the first shouts. It was only when the shouting increased, and sounded very close to the Emperor, that General Rapp (who was ahead of him with Lauriston, Lobau, and Durosnel, the orderly officers on duty, and the advance-guard of the picket) came back to the Emperor crying:

"Halt, Sire! The Cossacks!"

"Take the chasseurs of the picket," he answered, "and go forward."

The chasseurs (only ten or twelve had so far joined us) were already moving forward unbidden to join the advance-guard. The light was still so poor that one could not see anything beyond twenty-five yards, and only the clash of arms and the shouts of the men fighting indicated the direction of the skirmish, or even the fact that we were at grips with the enemy.¹ M. Emmanuel Lecouteulx, the Prince of Neuchâtel's aide-de-camp on duty, had his chest pierced right through by a sabre-thrust from a trooper of the Guard who mistook him for a Russian.²

The Emperor was left alone with the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself. All three of us held our swords in our hands. As the fighting was very near, and shifting closer towards him, the Emperor decided to move off several yards, on to the crest

¹ Cf. the account of this surprise in *Mémoires de Rapp*, 226, in the 27th Bulletin, Wereia, October 27, 1812; and in Gourgaud, *Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 530.

² "In the impetuous charge of our Grenadiers, Captain Lecouteulx was attacked and wounded as an enemy at the very moment that he had just killed a Cossack. It was through the green top-coat he was wearing over his uniform as aide to the Prince of Neuchâtel that the blow was misdirected." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 250.)

M. de Caulaincourt must be mistaken in saying that M. de Lecouteulx's chest was pierced through, for he survived his wound.

Charles Emmanuel de Lecouteulx de Canteleu, born in 1790, was made a captain on October 18, 1812, later reached the rank of colonel, and did not die till June 12, 1844, at Versailles.

Dennière, *Itinéraire*, III, is probably more exact when he says: "It was in this skirmish that Emmanuel Lecouteulx, aide-de-camp to the Prince of Neuchâtel, armed himself with a lance snatched from one of the Cossacks: whereupon a mounted grenadier of the Guard, deceived by his appearance, pursued him in turn, and wounded him with a sword-thrust. By a miracle, the blade went under his collar-bone without damage to the artery."

of the rise, so as to see better. At this moment the remaining chasseurs of the picket caught up with us; and the squadrons in attendance, to whom the Emperor had not given time to mount horse before he set out, came up immediately after. Guided by the shouts of those already engaged, the first two squadrons to arrive charged and broke up the foremost Cossacks. The two other squadrons, who were close behind, headed by the Duke of Istria, came up in time to support the first two, who were hard pressed and surrounded by a swarm of the enemy. By this time daylight was near enough to light up the scene. The plain and the road were alive with Cossacks. The Guard recaptured the guns and the few artillerymen in the enemy's hands, and forced the Cossacks to recross the river; but we were left with many wounded.

It is clear that if the Emperor had set out, as he had wished, before dawn, he would have found himself in the midst of this swarm of Cossacks with only his picket and the eight Generals and officers who accompanied him. If the Cossacks, who came face to face with us and at one moment surrounded us, had shown more courage and fallen upon our route silently, instead of shouting and clattering at the side of the road, we should have been carried off before the squadron could rescue us. Doubtless we should have sold our lives as dearly as one can by wielding light swords in the dark, hitting out blindly. But the Emperor would certainly have been either killed or captured. No one would even have known where to look for him, in a wide plain dotted all over with clumps of trees under cover of which the Cossacks had been able to hide within musket-shot of the road and the Guard.

If these details had not the confirmation of the army and of so many trustworthy men, they might be called in question. And how, indeed, could anyone suppose that a man of such foresight, a sovereign, and the greatest commander of all time, could have been in danger of capture five hundred yards from his headquarters, on a high road, the route of march of the whole army, and among the bivouacs of a con-

siderable guard of both cavalry and infantry? Is it credible that a thousand men could have lain in ambush and passed the night within the range of three or four musket-shots from our headquarters without being discovered? But this is all explained and proved by the following particulars, which I have summarized with care as being illustrative of the Emperor's habits.

We had very few light-armed troops left. They had not been spared, and were sorely harassed; and since they had been sent that same day to other points, this section of our position was poorly covered. In general our men fought well but kept a poor look-out. In no army were the duties of reconnoissance so neglected. At nightfall they set up a few sentry-posts indifferently placed, so as to have time to mount before the enemy arrive; but they seldom troubled to cover rear or flank.

The Emperor only selected his headquarters at the last moment. Two considerations had led him to form this habit: first, a measure of wise prudence; and second, the advantage of having all of his resources at his call until the very end of the day, and so keeping everyone on the alert.

He used sometimes to say to me: "If you make everything difficult, the really hard things seem less so."

The fact that officers and men sometimes undoubtedly suffered from these practices did not trouble the Emperor, who looked only to the main result and, being in the midst of his army and of a considerable guard, gave little thought to the organization of detail. Still intent on the offensive, he failed to notice the trouble which the Cossacks gave us now that the odds were against us.

The Guard had been in advance throughout the day, and so were obliged to fall back later on in order to take up position. Not having bivouacked until after dark, they did not themselves know where they were, or what was the lie of the land, but must have thought themselves still in the midst of the army. They put out no patrols. They were easy in the belief that the rest of the troops were covering the headquarters from a distance, and did not trouble even to make contact

with them. In fact, the Guard and the headquarters took no account of anything going on outside their own area. One battalion of the Guard was bivouacked barely three hundred yards from the spot, on the same side of the road, where the Cossacks had spent the night and from which they came upon the Emperor.

By night or by day, the Emperor would mount his horse without warning: he even took pleasure in going out unexpectedly and putting everyone at fault. His saddle-horses were divided into troops. Each troop consisted of two horses for himself, one for the Master of the Horse, and as many as were necessary for the other officers on duty with the Emperor. Throughout the whole twenty-four hours there was always one troop of horses saddled and bridled. Every officer had also to have a horse bridled; and the picket on duty, which consisted of an officer and twenty light horse, was always saddled and bridled. The squadrons in attendance provided and relieved the picket. On the other campaigns there was one squadron in attendance, but on the Russian there were four—half light cavalry and half grenadiers and dragoons. The picket never left the Emperor. The squadrons followed in echelon, and saddled when the Emperor called for his horses. As he did so in haste and without warning, he always set out with only two or three other persons; the remainder caught up. After Moscow, and indeed after Smolensk, the same squadrons remained in attendance for two or three days running: both men and horses were worn out. The Emperor usually returned to his quarters very late, when it was quite dark. The squadrons in attendance bivouacked as best they could, hurriedly and in the dark. When the Emperor mounted his horse in the field he usually set out at the gallop, if only for two or three hundred yards. However keen and alert they were, therefore, it was difficult for a troop to be actually alongside him from the very start. This explains how the Emperor came to be almost alone at one moment on the day of this scuffle.

The Prince of Neuchâtel and I were always close to the Emperor's horse. The General commanding the Guards in

attendance¹ rode at our side, but during the Russian campaign they all had other commands, and the Master of the Horse then took their place by right. When mounted, we rode in the following order: an advance-guard of four light horse, three orderly officers, two to four aides-de-camp—this group eighty paces forward—the Emperor: behind him the Master of the Horse, the Chief-of-Staff, and behind these several aides, if the Emperor so commanded, six staff officers from the Emperor's staff, two other aides-de-camp, and two officers attached to the Chief-of-Staff: then the officer and chasseurs constituting the picket: then, five hundred paces behind, the squadrons in attendance. If we were riding easily, they followed. If the Emperor galloped, they trotted. These details show how small the Emperor's escort was, and how wrong it is to suppose him surrounded by a bevy of troops, as some have asserted.

As soon as the Emperor had a few men² around him he pushed forward. (He had already issued their orders to the squadrons in attendance and the rest of the Guard.) He went quickly forward to reconnoitre the enemy's position beyond Malo-Jaroslavetz. He made a very close inspection of the formidable defences which had been carried on the previous day, and realized with regret that the enemy had indeed retired and left only a few Cossacks behind. His first impulse was to follow Kutusoff, still hoping to force him into an engagement, but to take the road towards Krasnoë³ instead of the one to Mojaïsk through Borowsk, where part of the army was already stationed with a considerable number of guns which had been unable to follow the troops to which they were attached on to the field of battle. The Viceroy, the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Prince of Eckmühl pointed out how exhausting this change of direction would prove to cavalry and artillery already in a state of exhaustion: and that it would lose us any lead which we might have over the Russians.

¹ There were four Generals commanding the Guards: Gouvion Saint-Cyr (cuirassiers), Eugène (chasseurs), Baraguey d'Hilliers (dragoons), and Junot (hussars).

² Caulaincourt returns to his account of what happened on October 25th, after the set-to with the Cossacks.

³ From Kalouga to Krasnoë through Yelnia.

The Emperor wavered for some time. The fight at Malo-Jaroslavetz was, in his opinion, not enough to counter-balance the defeat of the King of Naples. For the moment he wanted to put himself in the right about the attempt of that morning. It was only after long insistence on the consideration that Kutusoff, if he would not stand and fight in an excellent position such as at Malo-Jaroslavetz, was not at all likely to join battle twenty leagues further on, that we were able to persuade the Emperor, in this unofficial council, to take the road to Borowsk, where part of the troops, the greater part of the artillery, and all the carriages were already stationed. In view of the state of the horses, this last was a weighty consideration.

Did the Emperor wish it to seem that he was yielding only to the convictions of others? Or did he really believe that he might yet break the Russian Army and at last turn the whole campaign to his advantage before he decided on his winter quarters? I cannot say. But it is certain that the same question had been urgently presented to him during the night by some of the same people, and that he had resisted every conceivable argument brought forward to decide him. He merely postponed his decision until he could see for himself whether the enemy had really escaped him. It was for this reason that he wished to set out before dawn. After personally ascertaining the state of affairs in the van, the question was again debated. The Viceroy and the Prince of Eckmühl joined with the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Duke of Istria in persuading the Emperor; and, now that he was sure that Kutusoff had again escaped him, he did at last decide to move back along the road to Borowsk. He came back to Ghorodnia, and from there sent out his orders. Next day the army marched towards Borowsk, where the staff slept on the night of the 26th. A few inhabitants had returned to the town. It might be thought that when he left Moscow the Emperor had somehow anticipated the course of events, for he had ordered various precautionary measures against the Cossacks. But, as we have seen, they were unavailing. Nobody was used to keeping good guard, and men were too much disheartened and too exhausted to change their ways.

THE COSSACKS

Every man's first thought on arrival was to find food for himself and his horses; and this could only be done by going off the main road, and so risking capture by Cossacks or murder by peasants. The marches were too hard, and the cavalry too few and exhausted, for adequate detachments to be sent out on reconnaissance or to cover our flanks. We minimized, as far as was possible, the risks run by the Emperor in the scuffle with the Cossacks, but within forty-eight hours the whole army knew the story; and the impression made was regrettable. This incident should have served as a warning to everyone, proving as it did our want of vigilance; but the lesson passed unnoted. At the same time it reflected no credit on the daring or courage of the Cossacks, who allowed themselves to be driven off, and yielded their gains to two or three hundred horsemen.

They are certainly the finest light troops in the world for guarding an army, scouting the countryside, or carrying out skirmishing sallies; but whenever we faced up to them, and marched against them boldly in a solid body, they never offered resistance, even when they outnumbered us by two to one. Attempt to attack them singly, or charge them in scattered formation, and one is lost. They turn back as quickly as they withdraw. Being better horsemen, and mounted on more responsive horses than ours, they can escape us when necessary or pursue us when it suits them. They spare their horses: they may sometimes race them, or set them to long and exacting rides, but they generally spare them the futile running to and fro by which we wear out our own.

On the 27th the Emperor passed the night at Wereia, to give the artillery and other wheeled traffic time to take the lead. Having started very early, he reached the town during the morning, passed straight through, and did not halt until he was half a league beyond, on the road to Mojaïsk, at the top of a rise overlooking the country round. Here he stayed to watch the troops and convoys pass; and there they brought him Lieutenant-General the Count Wintzingerode,¹ aide-

¹ Ferdinand Charles Frederic Guillaume de Wintzingerode, born at Allendorf near Göttingen in Würtemberg, on February 15, 1770, died at Wiesbaden on June 17, 1818. He had been one of the authors of the coalition of 1809.

de-camp to the Tsar. He had commanded a body of light troops stationed on the road to Tver in order to cover Petersburg and keep watch on Moscow, where he was taken prisoner.

As different accounts of this affair have been given since the war¹ I shall give here the particulars I noted down, from the reports made to the Emperor, at the time it took place. Having probably learnt that the French Army had gone, M. de Wintzingerode, who was near Moscow, went into the suburbs and entered into talk with some of the inhabitants. Several slight attacks by the Cossacks or by armed peasants had forced the Duke of Treviso to draw in his small forces so as not to expose them to danger in that large city. Our troops being concentrated round the Kremlin, M. de Wintzingerode came disguised into the town as far as our outposts; and he conceived a hope of carrying out some military operation which should force the Duke of Treviso to evacuate, or else of achieving the same result by suborning our soldiers; which the inhabitants thought would be easy, as they believed the men to be discontented. Our troops were guarding only the Kremlin and our line of communications to Mojaisk, which led also to the army. M. de Wintzingerode, wearing a civilian top-coat over his uniform, got into conversation with the soldiers at our furthest outpost. He was accompanied by several of the townspeople who also spoke French, and following his example or instructions, these men discussed informally with the soldiers in an unofficial manner, events recently experienced, the set-backs we had experienced, the privations ahead of us, the dangers we were uselessly running, the goodness and generosity of the Tsar Alexander, his kindness towards foreigners, his liking for soldiers, the uselessness of fighting now that the Emperor Napoleon was in retreat, how advantageous it would be to lay down arms and live in peace until the end of the war in a country so ready to welcome them, and so on.

¹ The account of the matter will be found in Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 169 and 257; Denni  , *Itin  raire*, 115; in S  gur, *Histoire de Napol  on*, II, 140 and 144; in Rapp, *M  moires*, 228; in A. F. de B. Ch. (Beauchamp), *Histoire de la D  struction de Moscou en 1812*, who incorrectly states that Wintzingerode went to the Woskresenski gate for a parley.

Some of the soldiers, taking him for a plain townsman, let him run on without paying much heed to him or his talk. A more perspicacious hussar having heard some of his final remarks, kept him under observation. Shocked by his suggestions, he arrested him and took him to the guard-room;¹ from there, in spite of his protests and objections, he was taken before the officer in charge of the city. When he was recognized as a Russian officer, he vainly tried to plead that he had come to parley. The story would not hold water. He was kept under arrest, and taken to the Duke of Treviso, who treated him with consideration, but as a prisoner of war, being unable to accept the pretence by which M. de Wintzingerode wished to extricate himself; for he had come secretly, in disguise, in an attempt to suborn our soldiers, and had not been announced by a trumpeter as an emissary. M. Narishkin,² son of the Grand Chamberlain and aide-de-camp to M. de Wintzingerode, waited at a distance with a few Cossacks. Not seeing his commander return, he inquired of the townsmen what had happened, and they reported that he had been taken under arrest. Then, without giving notice, without sounding any bugle or calling an officer or sergeant to a parley, he went over to the French outpost and simply gave himself up, holding it a point of honour not to abandon his chief. This filial devotion on the part of an officer commanding a troop of men excited some surprise. The young man was sent to custody under guard.

The Emperor, to whom the capture of these officers was reported, ordered them to be brought to him; and they arrived at the point on the road where he dismounted at the same time as ourselves. M. de Wintzingerode was brought to

¹ See the account in Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 116, of Wintzingerode's conversation with the commandant of the outpost at Dwerkoe. This was the officer who arrested the General: a Lieutenant Leleu de Maupertuis, in the 5th Light Infantry of the Young Guard.

² Leon Alexandrovitch Narishkin, born on February 5, 1785, died at Naples on November 17, 1846. He was made Chamberlain at the age of fourteen, and appointed captain of hussars on March 28, 1812. He was wounded in the head at Borodino; promoted to Major-General in 1813, after Leipzig; and retired on March 23, 1842. He returned to the army on May 22, 1843, and was appointed Général-Lieutenant in 1844.

the Emperor by himself; and the Emperor reproached him for serving with the Russians when he was born in Germany, the subject of a country either ruled by France or allied with her. He added that, M. de Wintzingerode being one of his subjects, he would have him tried by a court-martial, which would also charge him with espionage; and that he would be shot as a traitor to his country. The more M. de Wintzingerode tried to justify himself, the more angry the Emperor became, reproaching him with having been for a long time in the pay of the English, with having taken part in all the plots against him and against France, with trying to suborn the soldiers at Moscow, urging them to desert, and advising them to commit acts of cowardice, in the name of a sovereign who would have despised them for it. M. de Wintzingerode replied that he was not born in a country belonging to France; furthermore, that he had not been in his own country since childhood, and that he had been in the Russian service for many years on account of his attachment and gratitude to the Tsar Alexander, who had befriended him.

Then, attempting to put a different colour on his actions at Moscow, for which the Emperor justly rebuked him, he went on to say that he parleyed to avoid useless bloodshed, and above all to avoid further misfortune for the town: that since the French were going to evacuate it, he limited himself to the suggestion that they should do so without fighting—a suggestion to their common advantage—and so forth.

The Emperor, more and more annoyed, was raising his voice so loud that even the picket could hear him. From the first his personal officers had withdrawn a little. Everyone was on tenterhooks. Glancing at each other, we could see in every eye the distress caused by this painful scene between a sovereign ruler and a captured officer—even though the latter's behaviour at Moscow was very provocative. I was discussing it with the Duke of Piacenza,¹ who, like myself, commented very unhappily on the matter. The Prince of Neuchâtel was even more uncomfortable, as he had remained close to the

¹ He was then actually Charles Le Brun, aide-de-camp to the Emperor, but he was to become the second Duke of Piacenza.

Emperor. We could see this in his expression, and his remarks confirmed it when, on some pretext, he was able to move away and join us. The Emperor called for camp-guards to remove M. de Wintzingerode. When no one passed on this order, he repeated that someone was to send up camp-guards in such loud tones that the two men attached to the picket came forward. The Emperor then repeated to the prisoner some of the charges he had already made against him, and added that he deserved to be shot as a traitor. At this word M. de Wintzingerode, who had been listening with eyes on the ground, stood erect, raised his head, and, looking straight at the Emperor and at those standing nearest to him, said loudly:

"As whatever you please, Sire—but not as a traitor."

And he walked away by himself, ahead of the guards, who kept their distance.

The King of Naples, who had joined the Emperor a few moments before, tried in vain to calm him, as also did the Prince of Neuchâtel. He was walking to and fro with hurried, nervous steps, summoning now one of us, now another, to vent his anger. He met only with silence. I have never seen him so angry. The worthy Prince of Neuchâtel was beside himself. He came to talk with me, and sent one of his aides-de-camp to instruct the guards that they were to treat the prisoner with consideration.¹ He directed his own officers to supply him with anything he required. Meanwhile the Emperor was yet again recounting to various people his grievances, both old and new, against this General. Some dated from earlier even than the penultimate war against Austria. The Prince of Neuchâtel, like myself, had never seen the Emperor so completely lose control of himself.

A little way off we could see a fine large house. The Emperor, whose nervous irritability had not passed off, sent two squadrons to sack and fire it, adding: "Since these barbarians like to burn their towns, we must help them."

¹ The Emperor's violence "was disapproved; no one took any notice of it, but on the contrary everyone hastened to wait upon the captive General to reassure and condole with him." (Ségur, *Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 145.)

The order was all too well obeyed. It was the only time I ever heard him give such an order; as a rule, indeed, he tried to prevent destruction which only damaged private interests or ruined private citizens. He returned to Wereia before nightfall. Not one inhabitant remained.

I called for the Prince of Neuchâtel as we had agreed, and together we went to the King of Naples to make him undertake to speak to the Emperor about M. de Wintzingerode. We had obtained information from him about his family and the exact date when he had left Germany; and the Prince of Neuchâtel had already taken an opportunity, on the way back, of explaining to the Emperor that M. de Wintzingerode was not one of his subjects. I was easy about the outcome of this affair in proportion to the Emperor's annoyance; for princes, like other men, have a conscience which bids them right the wrongs they have done. But as the hours seem long to prisoners, we were impatient to obtain the decision, which we could foresee, but which alone could remove all anxiety.

The Emperor sent to me to inquire if I had news of the courier. This order seemed to me to promise well, for it was still before the earliest time that he could arrive. The Emperor, although considerably quieter, still needed to vent his spleen. I listened; and agreed that M. de Wintzingerode's behaviour at Moscow had been irregular, that he had made himself liable to trial and judgment by the corps which had taken him; but I concluded by saying that the Emperor could not have sent for him and spoken to him himself merely in order to show him a pointless severity—for the Emperor, I said, had used his prisoner so sternly in words that no further punishment was needed. I added that severity would now look like personal vengeance, and an act of malice against the Tsar Alexander, whose aide-de-camp the prisoner was; and that rulers had no need, after so many cannon-balls had been fired, of coming to grips with each other in person.

The Emperor began to laugh, and pinched my ear affectionately, as was his habit when he sought to coax people. He said:

"You're right; but Wintzingerode is a bad character, and

a schemer. Is it right for a man of his rank to go about suborning soldiers, to lower himself to spying, or pimping for deserters? To allow himself to use the name of his sovereign to incite soldiers to cowardice and mutiny? I shall send him to France. . . . I would rather they had taken a Russian; these foreigners in the service of the highest bidder are poor booty. . . . So it's for Alexander's sake that you take an interest in him? Well, well, we won't hurt him."

The Emperor gave me a little tap on the cheek, his signal mark of affection. From the first I had seen that he only wanted an excuse to go back on his words.

I did not wait for dismissal to go off with such good news; but the Emperor called me back and instructed me to persuade M. Narishkin to dine with us. He added that he would send him back to the Russian outposts in a few days, but that I was not to mention it.

"As to M. de Wintzingerode," the Emperor said to me jokingly, "you don't take so much interest in him because he isn't a Russian."

Then he began again the tale of all his faults:

"He is a secret agent of the London government. He was a spy in Vienna, a spy in Petersburg. He is a framer of intrigues wherever he goes, and doesn't deserve the least consideration—certainly not, on any grounds, the post of aide-de-camp to the Tsar Alexander, for those close personal duties belong only to Russian subjects, honourable men against whom there is no political scandal."

In this conversation with the Emperor I brought in, as we had agreed with the Prince of Neuchâtel, the plea that the interest of our own prisoners demanded some consideration for this man.

"That will not be the reason," replied the Emperor sharply, "for my showing him mercy; his behaviour has put him outside ordinary rights. It is because I never really wanted to do him any harm; and though the Emperor Alexander is at fault in making such a man his aide-de-camp, I will not be likewise at fault in ill-using a man who is particularly close to him. I shall send him to France, with a

good escort, to prevent him from intriguing throughout Europe, with three or four other firebrands of his sort."

The Emperor, in dismissing me, told me again not to mention as yet his good intentions toward M. de Wintzingerode. I confined myself to telling the Prince of Neuchâtel that he could be easy about the fate of his prisoner, and he went with the King of Naples to dine in the Emperor's quarters, intending to obtain a definite decision in this matter. A moment later the Emperor sent for me again, just as we were having dinner, and questioned me about the family and mode of life of young Narishkin. He directed me to tell Narishkin, as though it were from myself, that he wanted peace: that it rested with the Tsar to make an honourable one: that the Emperor Napoleon had never attached great importance to Poland, and had proved as much by emancipating it only in part: that he still attached importance only to the system which should close Europe against England, as the only means of forcing peace on that Power: that it should be possible to agree upon some way of carrying this out which would suit the situation of both parties; that the Emperor Napoleon had occupied Moscow only because they refused to treat with him; he was still ready to enter into negotiations; he still had a magnificent army; and the Russians knew they had not beaten him; that the skirmish with the King of Naples was no battle, enormous reinforcements were coming to him, his war material would be doubled as he drew nearer to the base of operations; therefore, if the war continued, he would be stronger and threaten Russia more seriously than if he had stayed in Moscow; his position was a very favourable one, enabling him to offer good terms to the Tsar Alexander, because it was clear that no military reverse compelled him to it; that the moment was no less favourable to Russia, as the movement of the French Army, being in some sort a retreat, counterbalanced the constant advantages our troops had obtained, and put both governments in a position to negotiate with honour; that the real damage Russia had suffered was by fire, which notoriously was not of our doing; that the Emperor would possibly send him back to the outposts because he knew that his family were particularly close to the

Tsar, and he did not wish the Tsar to remain any longer in anxiety about Narishkin's fate, knowing from M. de Lauriston and from myself that we had always had much to congratulate ourselves on in his procedure.

I went back to M. Narishkin, who had dined with us. I reassured him as to his General's fate, and carried out all the Emperor's instructions.

Meanwhile the King of Naples and the Prince of Neuchâtel talked to him with their usual amiability. M. de Wintzingerode was regarded as a prisoner and sent to France with his aide-de-camp. I gave M. Narishkin some money and, after rejoining our carriages on the following day, sent him an overcoat, as he had only his uniform. My body-servant found him marching with the head of our column, which they followed as far as Ghjat. Thence they set out for Paris with an officer and a camp-guard as escort. Chance served them well, for they were set free by M. Tchernychev,¹ who fell in with them beyond Borissov as he was going with a troop of Cossacks to warn Wittgenstein of the movements of Tchitchagoff's army.

The Duke of Treviso evacuated Moscow on the ———² after blowing up the Kremlin and the barracks in accordance with the orders he had received. On the 27th he was at Mojaïsk. From there, for several days, they had been sending back the wounded by the scanty means of transport they had been able to get together. Some consignments of rice had arrived there, and the Duke of Abrantès had established depots there which supplied the needs of the first arrivals.

The following day, the 28th, we passed within sight of that town, but did not enter it. The Emperor received news during the day of the Duke of Taranto, who had been forced to lie inactive until the 15th on account of the reinforcement

¹ "The presence of these foreigners, witnessing our disasters, worried the Emperor; and he sent them on from Ghjat to Smolensk. They had hardly left headquarters when a troop of Cossacks set them free." (*Dennée, Itinéraire*, 120.)

² In the manuscript this date has been left blank. Mortier evacuated Moscow on the 25rd, at two in the morning: one hour later the explosion took place which destroyed part of the Kremlin.

of the enemy.¹ In the evening he heard that the rear-guard of the 5th Army had been hotly engaged near Medyn, and that Poniatowski was marching towards Ghjat by cross-roads.

Passing by Mojaïsk, the Emperor halted beside the road to obtain some account of the evacuation and of the distribution of supplies that he had ordered for the wounded.² He himself took part in placing many of them in his own carriages, and in any that passed. In spite of all warnings that this would inevitably mean death, the unfortunate men who had left the field hospital to drag themselves along the road were placed, by his orders, wherever they could hang on—on the covers of wagons, and even in the forage-carts, or in the back of vehicles already crowded with the sick and wounded from Malo-Jaroslawetz. And in due course they were the victims of the Emperor's good intentions, who had thought to remove them from any danger they might run through the barbarity of the Russian peasants. Those who did not die of exhaustion, through the discomforts of their position, either fell victims to the cold nights or died of hunger. The wounded of the Guard, and those who were in the Emperor's carriages, were nourished and cared for, thanks to the admirable and devoted work of Doctor Lerminier and of Gy; but for the rest, since all the other carriages were lost, not a score of them reached Wilna. Men in the best of health could not have endured this mode of travel, and could not have held on to the vehicles in the positions in which most of them were placed. So one can imagine the state of these unhappy men when they had covered a league or two. They had to endure the jolting, the

¹ Macdonald and the 10th Corps were forced to concentrate in Courland, before Riga, and were separated from Gouvion Saint-Cyr by Wittgenstein's strategic move upon Drissa. From that time, Macdonald was thrust beyond the range of major operations.

² When they left the sick-ward they were given provisions for two days. This was a quite insufficient supply, since those to whom the wounded were given in charge, having for the most part no provisions themselves, could not come to their help. Moreover a considerable number, hurrying to get away and reach those fatal transports in which they thought they saw their salvation, and being already greatly inconvenienced by being outside the town, did not take these rations. They soon regretted them; for though on the first and second day some of them moved men to pity, they were not long in learning that hunger makes those who suffer it deaf to all human feeling. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

fatigue, and the cold, all at once. Never was there a more heartrending scene.

To return to Mojaïsk: I must here mention an incident which shows how the impulse of fear on the imagination can impart strength even to the weakest. The Emperor's carriages had brought away from Moscow all those of his establishment who were sick with the exception of two postillions, stricken with a malignant and pestilential fever accompanied by blotches. The doctors, regarding them as dead, and their sickness, in any case, as too contagious, told me it was useless to move them. I had them carefully taken to the Guards' infirmary, to lie with the sick of that unit who, being in the same state, would have to be left behind there. All possible steps had been taken to see that they were well cared for, and recommended to the attention of M. Toutolmine, if we should evacuate the city. One of these postillions—I tell the story because I should not have believed it had I not witnessed it myself—one of these postillions, who had been delirious for twelve days, whom I had seen dying the day before we left, and of whom the doctors, as I said, had no further hopes, recovered his reason four days later. He heard mention of our leaving. He learned that the Emperor had left Moscow and that the French who still remained would probably evacuate it. His anxiety—I should say rather his despair—gave him strength to leap from his bed. He dragged himself into the town, procured two bottles of wine, some biscuit and a little brandy, took to the road, and dragged himself along until he rejoined our carriages at Mojaïsk. Everyone thought he was a ghost, unable to believe this was the same man who, when he was carried to the Guards' infirmary, showed hardly a sign of life. They took care of him, and after ten days, on practically starvation diet, he recovered completely.

The carriages, drawn by tired and underfed horses, were travelling fourteen and fifteen hours of the twenty-four. They kept to the road, and found no place that afforded them any supplies. During the halts, the drivers went aside from the road with some of their horses in search of food and fodder, however poor, in the deserted villages and encampments.

Being uncertain as to what they would have to-morrow, they kept whatever they found carefully to themselves. Often they had not even time to start a fire. Never was there a sadder fate, a more wretched or hopeless position. Inevitable death seemed to beset us on all sides. The surgeons and doctors, with neither food nor physic nor bandages, and having for the most part not even bread for themselves, were forced to shun the hapless sick or wounded, to whom they could not be of any service.

As far as Orcha, we had to cross a veritable desert. The country on either hand of our route had been marched over, eaten out, and left bare, by the army and by the detachments that joined us. The plight of the carriages can be imagined. Having left Moscow with us, already full of refugees, women and children, they had had to take up the men wounded at Winkovo and Malo-Jaroslawetz: and to these, as I have said, were added also the wounded at Winkovo and Mojaisk. They were put on the top-seats of the carts, on the fore-carriage, behind on the trunks, on the seats, in the fodder-carts. They were even put on the hoods of the wagons, when there was no room underneath. One can imagine the spectacle our convoys presented. At the least jolt those who were most insecurely placed fell; the drivers took no care. The driver following, if he were not distracted or in a stupor, would be away from his horses: or even, for fear of stopping and losing his place (in the line), he would drive pitilessly on over the body of the wretch who had fallen. Nor did the other vehicles coming behind pay any heed.

My eyes never saw a sight so horrible as the march of our army forty-eight hours after Mojaisk. Every heart was closed to pity by the fear of starving, of losing the overladen vehicles, of seeing the horses die, already exhausted by toil and starvation. I still shudder when I say that I have seen men deliberately drive their horses at speed over rough ground, so as to get rid of the unfortunates with whom they were overweighted: and although they knew that horses would mutilate them or wheels crush them, they would yet smile triumphantly when a jolt freed them of one of these wretches.

Every man thought of himself, and of himself alone. Every man felt that his life depended on the preservation of his little vehicle, with its few provisions, and would have sacrificed twenty lives to spare the poor hacks that drew this last treasure. Each heartened himself with the thought that in front of him he would find foodstuffs; but except in some large towns, such as Smolensk, which had a few stores, they found nothing. The horses were fed on rotting corn and straw from old encampments, unless they were taken aside from the road for at least a league's distance, at the risk of capture and massacre.

On the 28th the headquarters staff halted at Ouspenskoie.¹ At two in the morning the Emperor sent for me. He was in bed. He told me to see that the door was well closed, and come and sit close to the bed; this was not his habit. He then spoke to me about the situation in general, and about the state of the army, whose extreme disorganization he still did not or would not admit. He ended by bidding me speak to him frankly, and tell him what I myself thought. I did not have to be pressed, but gave the Emperor my opinion in full on the consequences that would ensue from the disorganization of the army, and especially on the miseries that would be caused by the severe cold. I reminded him of the reply which the Tsar Alexander was reported to have made when he received, through Lauriston, the proposals of peace sent from Moscow: "My campaign is just beginning." I told him that he must take this reply literally: the further the season advanced, the more everything would favour the Russians and, above all, the Cossacks.

"Your prophet Alexander has been mistaken more than once," he said; but there was no lightness in the tone of his reply.

The Emperor did not seem convinced of the truth of my forecast. He flattered himself that the superior intelligence of our troops would enable them somehow to safeguard themselves against the cold—that they would take the same precautions as the Russians, or even improve on them. He did not question that the army would establish its winter

¹ A ruined manor-house between Mojaïsk and Borodino.

quarters at Orcha or Witepsk. He would not yet admit that he might be forced to retire behind the Beresina, if only to be nearer his main supply depots at Minsk and at Wilna, and in closer contact with Schwarzenberg and the armies on the Dwina, whose latest operations would necessarily affect his decisions. He did not question, in view of their strength, that they would have captured Polotsk, and he regretted the wounding of Marshal Saint-Cyr, which robbed him, he said, of his most capable lieutenant.¹ The arrival of the Polish Cossacks, of whom he still expected to find 1500 or 2000 in a few days, ought, it seemed to him, entirely to change the situation and the state of our affairs; for they would guard the army and give our soldiers time to rest and feed themselves. Since Malo-Jaroslavetz these wretches had lived on horseflesh and a little thin soup. And this last help came only to those who had been on marauding expeditions; for the rest, they lived only on grilled horseflesh. The horses that collapsed on the march were torn in pieces before they had time to die.

After an hour's conversation about the army, about Russia, Poland, the prosperous state of France, and the means of making good his losses, the Emperor reached the main question, about which he had sent for me, and to which he had led up with this introduction. He told me it was possible—it was even probable—that he would go to Paris as soon as he had established the army in some definite position. He asked what I thought of this proposal: whether it would make a bad impression on the army: whether it would not be the best way of reorganizing the army, of keeping a firm hand on Europe, and keeping everything quiet: and whether, finally, I foresaw any difficulties about crossing Prussia without an escort. He added that in a week's time the Russian Army would be in no better state to give battle than his own; they too needed rest and reorganization; it froze as hard for the Russians as for us: and, moreover, the way in which Kutusoff was following us without embarking on any major operation proved that he

¹ Polotsk had been taken by the enemy, and Gouvion Saint-Cyr wounded on October 18th.

lacked the necessary strength. We had travelled so slowly, he said, and with so many stops, that it should have been easy for him to get ahead of us; Kutusoff must know we were marching in column of route, and yet we heard nothing of him. He said further that we should find a fresh and well-organized army at Smolensk, and another on the Beresina; that the artillery sections of these armies and of those on the Dwina were well horsed, and strong enough to reinforce our own: that the Austrians and Reynier were only a little further back;¹ that with all this war material brought together we should have an adequate superiority, even if the Army of Moldavia joined up with the other Russian armies, to ensure us a quiet winter. Wilna could send several divisions, which would still further increase our strength later on, and the immense stores of clothing there would meet all needs.

I replied to the Emperor that, just because the evils of our plight seemed to me greater than he could see or believe, I felt no hesitation about the remedy. There was only one: that he should date his orders of the day, like his decrees, from the Palace of the Tuileries. I did not stop at minor considerations, such as what might be said or thought in the army, when the question really was what might be attempted in Europe. I added that what he had thought of doing was the one thing which could be really useful, the one thing which a faithful servant could advise. He had no need to hesitate: he needed only to choose his moment carefully. As to the danger of crossing Prussia, it could be avoided by travelling under another name; as nobody would know of the journey in advance, the possible dangers could be classed with the thousand risks to which one is exposed every day.

I tried to open the Emperor's eyes to the real state of the army, pointing out that the evils of its disorganization were all the more difficult to check because discouragement on the part of certain leaders was one of its causes. They were indeed letting their units break up entirely, and did nothing to keep the soldiers in hand, lest they should have to fight with too

¹ Schwarzenberg was at Bialystok, and Reynier, commanding the 7th Corps (Saxons), was at Wengrow.

small a number of men, whose loyalty kept them with the colours. I told the Emperor what impression I thought would be made, not only in France but in Europe, by the news of his retreat, and, even more, by the news of those disasters in which he was still reluctant to believe; and I drew the conclusion that his return was the necessary counter to this.

The Emperor, in the end, seemed less sceptical about my forebodings. He thought that only his presence could adequately hasten the mustering of all the forces to give an army in three months. He ended by asking if I did not think that overtures to the Tsar Alexander, now that the Russian provinces would be evacuated, might not lead to peace.

"No more than at Moscow," I replied. "The news of our retreat will have made everyone exultant."

It was half-past five when the Emperor dismissed me. He told me to think over what he had said, and that he would discuss it with me again after he had talked to the Prince of Neuchâtel.¹

On the next day, the 29th, we were at Ghjat. The cold was already intense. The despatches, which were now more frequent as we were going to meet them, had for several days met with no delays, but they had again been interrupted since the previous day by the appearance of enemy parties on our line of communications. The latest despatches from Paris were dated in September. At Borowsk we had begun to feel the cold. Only the surface of the ground was frozen. The weather was fine, and the nights were quite endurable in the open if one had a fire. Here at Ghjat the winter was already more noticeable.

Since leaving Wereia, I had taken to travelling on foot. I made the daily marches of the army, and found it advantageous as I did not suffer from the cold, and met with no ill results during our long retreat. At Ghjat we found the remnant of a consignment sent from France for the Emperor's household in the charge of two footmen. Part of the consignment had been pillaged by the Cossacks. Having no means of transport for these supplies, we distributed them all round, and there

¹ In spite of this late sitting, Napoleon left Ouspenskoie at daybreak.

was abundance at headquarters. Clos-Vougeot and Chamber-tin were the common drink. We stored up strength and a sense of well-being against the days of real privation to which we were just coming. Everyone still had a few provisions. There was a small ration of biscuit. The men endured the long marches well, in spite of the cold nights and several patches of ground which a brief thaw had made very bad going. It was otherwise with the horses. The necessity of going two leagues aside from our route to forage, and the poor quality of what was brought in with such danger and exertion, left them worn out. All but the strongest died. The reserve horses were harnessed up; and as these were no longer enough, we were already beginning to abandon some of the vehicles.

So far the Cossacks following our rear-guard gave very little trouble. As the state of the cavalry and the speed of our march prevented us from sending out scouting parties, we had no news of the enemy. However, as there were no Cossacks alongside our route, the raiding parties from the head of the column went out and returned, seeing only a few peasants who fled at our approach. This easy foraging had one great disadvantage, in that the sense of security thus created increased the number of stragglers. As there was no food without raids, everyone wanted to raid. The raiders and stragglers of the rear-guard were not so fortunate. The enemy captured a good number of these every day. Satisfied no doubt with this, they seldom ventured within range of our muskets.

On the 20th, we made Weliczewo our headquarters for the night. This fine manor, however, had not a single rafter left, and we had difficulty in collecting enough material from the wreckage to patch up one room for the Emperor and one for the Major-General. The billiard-table was the only piece of furniture still intact. Here we received the delayed despatches.

On the following day, the 31st, the headquarters and the Guard were stationed at Wiasma, where we stayed through the first of November.¹ As much of the town as had survived

¹ The Emperor arrived at Wiasma at four in the evening of the 31st, and set out again at midday on the 2nd of November.

the original conflagration was in good condition. The army received some rations there, and the horses attached to headquarters were given a little fodder. The few inhabitants remaining at the time of the invasion were now still fewer.

The Emperor did not even make a guess at Kutusoff's march; and Kutusoff left us very quiet. The weather was fine. The Emperor repeated more than once that the Russian autumn was like the autumns at Fontainebleau; and, judging what the weather would be like in ten days' or a fortnight's time by what it was on that particular day, he said to the Prince of Neuchâtel that this was just the weather one had at Fontainebleau around St. Hubert's Day, and that the stories people told about the Russian winter would only scare children. At Wiasma the Emperor had news of General Baraguay d'Hilliers, who was holding Yelnia as he had been ordered.¹ Also he learned of the evacuation of Polotsk,² notified Belluno that he was moving to get into touch with him, and ordered him to retake Polotsk.³ He also wrote to the Duke of Bassano, to announce his movements, and instructed the Duke in his turn to inform the Prince of Schwarzenberg, Marshal MacDonald, etc. His movement aimed, he said, at getting into touch with his other armies for the winter.⁴

On the 2nd we halted at Samlowo;⁵ on the 3rd at Slawkowo, where we had the first snow. It was the general opinion that the security of our flanks during the preceding few days (the enemy, since his attack at Medyn, having barely kept up with our rear-guard) was only a ruse to foster confidence and to bring about, somewhere near Borodino, another skirmish on the lines of Woronovo. But Kutusoff's weak pursuit was actually due, as we afterwards discovered, to his

¹ Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 272.

² Napoleon received at Wiasma the reports from Gouvion Saint-Cyr dated October 19th and 20th.

³ Victor had left Smolensk to go to the assistance of the 2nd Corps. He came up with it on October 29th, on the Lukomla.

⁴ The *Correspondance* includes no letter to Maret dated from Wiasma, except an unimportant note about the transformation of a Protestant church at Cassel into a Catholic church.

⁵ The Emperor spent the night of the 2nd at Samlowo, in a little church which had been surrounded with a barricade. At three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day he arrived at the manor-house of Jaskowo, near Slawkowo.

uncertainty regarding our movements. He did not know definitely until the 27th that our march against him had only been the prelude to a retreat. On the 28th he directed Miloradovich, to whom he attached a strong body of infantry and cavalry, to attack us and cut off our rearward divisions before we reached Wiasma.¹ The Emperor learned of this attack on the 3rd, at Slawkowo. He learned that the Viceroy, Prince Poniatowski, and Elchingen had had to support Eckmühl, who was then in command of the rear-guard.² He had already been informed in the morning that the Cossacks who, since Malo-Jaroslawetz, had been content with a very weak pursuit of our rear-guard, had had some success in an attack on a convoy on the 1st of November;³ and at this later time he learned that the Prince of Eckmühl, who commanded the rear-guard and whose march was slowed and hindered by the large number of stragglers whom hunger and sickness had already separated from their units, was still a good distance from Wiasma when the Russian infantry appeared. Not having a strong force, the Marshal had to hasten his march. Meanwhile Marshal Ney was encamped before Wiasma. The Viceroy and Prince Poniatowski had known since the previous day that the enemy was closing in on the Prince of Eckmühl and had consequently slackened their advance. They also took up their position before Wiasma in order to await him.

The Cossacks swarmed over the countryside, and constantly cut off communications between our corps, however close they were to each other. The fight went to our advantage, once we were in battle order; but it was unfortunate that the Emperor, not expecting this renewed activity on the part of

¹ After Malo-Jaroslawetz, Kutusoff had retreated towards Kalouga as far as Gantcharowo. On the 28th he gave orders for the pursuit. Miloradovich took the cross-country road which came out on our flank between Ghjat and Wiasma, while Kutusoff himself advanced upon Smolensk by a parallel route 8 or 10 leagues to the south of ours. Platow, with twenty regiments of Cossacks, was ordered to follow our rear-guard.

² Battle of Wiasma (November 3, 1812). Cf. Baron Lejeune, *Souvenirs d'un Officier de l'Empire*, Vol. II, 395. Lejeune was Chief-of-Staff to Davout.

³ During that day Miloradovich's scouts had carried out a raid on Eugène's baggage-train, which was having difficulty at the crossing of the marsh at Tsarewo-Zaimitché. At this point an earthen causeway, 500 yards long, over which the high road previously ran, was now unpracticable.

Kutusoff, and thinking that the Russian general would try to get ahead of us rather than harass us, was at Slawkowo on that day—and the Guard with him. As nobody held supreme command, there was no unity in the dispositions made. Our men fought bravely for six hours, but solely on the defensive. The enemy were thus made to pay dearly for the daring of their attempt, and lost a great number of men; and for this they achieved nothing except that they inflicted severe damage on the 1st Corps, in which some disorder was shown when it passed ahead of the Viceroy's army. This disorder was still greater at the crossing of the bridge.¹ Until then—as long, that is, as it had to withstand alone the attacks of the enemy—the 1st Corps had maintained its honour and reputation, although it was fiercely attacked and its formation broken by the artillery. This momentary disorder was conspicuous because it was the first time that these gallant infantry broke their ranks and compelled their dogged commander to give ground. I have related these painful details because from this incident must be dated our disorganization and misfortunes. The 1st Corps, which on taking the field was the largest and finest, a rival to the Guard, was thenceforward the hardest hit; and the evil spread. Poniatowski, the Viceroy, and Ney all fought as in the days of our success.

The Emperor had to give the command of the rear-guard to Marshal Ney, whose energy and courage increased with his dangers and difficulties. The Emperor busied himself drawing up a body of instructions on the manner in which the retreat should be conducted. This, he thought, would put right all the troubles of which we complained, arising from the attacks of the Cossacks. He likened them to the Arabs, and directed that we should march, as in Egypt, with the baggage in the centre, a half-battalion at the front and the rear, and battalions in file on the flanks. In this way we should be able to direct our fire, in case of need, on all sides, like a square.² The units

¹ The bridge over the Wiasma.

² Letter from the Prince of Neuchâtel to the Duke of Elchingen: "Monsieur le Duc, the Emperor has given you his instructions verbally, and no one could be more competent than yourself to know what dispositions should be made.

could march, he said, at a short distance from each other, with artillery between them. He talked a great deal about these dispositions, which he regarded as a sure safeguard for the army, flattering himself that he would be able to take up a position at Smolensk. The danger, however, was not in the attacks of the Cossacks, which our soldiers when in platoons never feared and had always repulsed when they were so minded. The danger lay in hunger, in the lack of provisions, and in the absence of any organized supplies service, which led to the disorganization of all the units, an inevitable consequence of the speed of the march and the devastation over this line of country. It would have been necessary to limit the march to three or four leagues a day, measured along the route, in order to cover as much again in collecting food on our flanks. In this way, the soldiers would have followed the flag, and would nearly all have been saved. The enemy, however, would have gained the lead, or else overtaken us and attacked us from all quarters: and to obviate this danger, it was held, the other disadvantages had to be endured.

The Emperor, thinking that this attack by the Russians was a general movement of their whole army, decided to halt. By massing his troops near Slawkowo he hoped to have a good opportunity of falling unexpectedly upon the enemy, who

You should energetically prevent the attempts of this rabble of Cossacks, and treat them as we treated the Arabs in Egypt."

Letter of the Prince of Neuchâtel to the Prince of Eckmühl: "Prince: It is of the utmost importance to change the formation in which you march in the neighbourhood of the enemy, since he has such a great force of Cossacks. You should march, as we marched in Egypt, with the baggage in the centre and proceeding in as many files as the road allows. One half-battalion should march in front and one in the rear, with battalions in file on either flank, so that by facing outward they can give fire in all directions. It would be no disadvantage to space these battalions a little, and put several files of cannon between them on the flanks. There should be no man away from his unit and no man without a gun. After the narrowing of the road at Wiasma, the Duke of Elchingen will act as rear-guard to the army. The Emperor directs that after Wiasma you should march so as to support the Duke of Elchingen in case of need, and to that end come to the necessary arrangements with him and have an officer of your staff constantly in attendance upon him. You should regulate your pace in accordance with that of the Duke of Elchingen. Since Ney's corps and yours are enough to conduct the retreat, it is the Emperor's intention that the Prince Poniatowski and the Viceroy's corps should make a full day's march in order to reach Smolensk, marching in the above formation. I am leaving four officers at Wiasma to bring us news of you." (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

thought they were only following up a rear-guard, and so making them regret their rash pursuit. Ney reported on the events of the previous day, in consequence of the disorder of the 1st Corps, which was so discouraging that any man but the Emperor would have abandoned this idea of a surprise attack. Ney announced that he was occupying the narrow passage of a wood behind Wiasma, but that, on account of the withdrawal of the 1st and 4th Corps, he would have to continue his retreating movement before dawn in order not to risk the loss of his troops. He added that the behaviour of the 1st Army on the previous day had set a bad example to all the troops, and had a bad and dangerous effect on them. This report, however, which arrived in the middle of the morning, did not change the Emperor's dispositions. He still believed that all the Russian Army was massed together, and that a lively and sudden attack on this cumbersome body of troops would have a glorious result. He stayed at Slawkowo, hoping for a thorough revenge, throughout the 4th. The enemy, however, attempted nothing. Ney's discouraging reports followed one upon another; and so did the arrival of the various corps, who threw each other into confusion. On the 5th, the Emperor had to resume his march. Junot led off, followed by the Young Guard and the 2nd and 4th Cavalry Corps; then the Old Guard, Poniatowski, Eugène, and Davout, whose corps was disintegrated. Ney conducted the rear-guard with a vigour worthy of his courage, and infused his own energy into all around him.

On the 5th, we spent the night at Dorogobouje. The despatches continued to arrive regularly. The weather, which had been milder for thirty-six hours before, became suddenly colder. There was no news of the enemy. Was Kutusoff following behind? Or was he ahead of us? This uncertainty added further to the Emperor's difficulties and anxieties. He gave his attention to the organization of a body of cavalry which should guard our flanks;¹ but with the exception of the

¹ Caulaincourt is here a little previous. The order creating this body of cavalry, of which General de Latour-Maubourg was to have the command, is dated from Smolensk, on November 9th.

Guard our cavalry was so much reduced that from the beginning there was little to be hoped from this measure. It was here that the Emperor, forced to take stock of himself and probe his wounds to their depth, realized how much he had already lost.

On the 6th, headquarters were at Mikhaïlewska. There the Emperor received the news of the retreat of the corps of the Dwina to Siennio; and the news of the arrival there of the army of the Duke of Belluno, which would, he thought, put everything once more in order.¹

On the following day he had a second order sent off, telling him again to recapture Polotsk, and also notifying him again of our expected arrival at Smolensk, where, he said, he would go into quarters. It was a day of bad news. The Emperor was first much concerned about the details he had learned of the retreat of his troops on the Dwina, which occurred just when he most needed their success. Then he was greatly perturbed by the first news he received of Malet's conspiracy.²

On the evening of October 22nd, Malet escaped from the private asylum where he had been kept a prisoner, and had gained such influence over certain public officials and over the troops of the garrison that he succeeded in paralysing the government from midnight until nine in the morning. During this time he placed the Minister and the Prefect of Police³

¹ As we have seen, Victor had effected a junction with the 2nd Army, which was then under the command of General Merle. The 2nd Army, defeated by Wittgenstein, had fallen back on to Siennio and from there on to Czereja. For the order to recapture Polotsk, see *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19326, the Emperor to Berthier, Mikhaïlewska, November 7th.

² The question of the date on which the Emperor first heard of Malet's conspiracy remains to this day obscure. M. Frédéric Masson has devoted a whole chapter to it in his book *Pour l'Empereur*, I, 270.

As M. Masson points out, Denniée says (*Itinéraire*, 120) that this news came through on November 2nd. Ségur (*Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 215) gives the 6th. Meneval (*Napoléon et Marie-Louise*, I, 556) gives the 8th. Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 284) gives the 6th.

Frédéric Masson, basing his conclusions largely on some letters from Napoleon to Cambacérès and to Maret, which are dated from Smolensk on November 11th, inclines to the latest date. (*Lettres interceptées par les Russes durant la campagne de 1812*, published by Léon Hennet and Emm. Martin, *la Sabretache*, 1913, pp. 312 *et seq.*) The evidence of M. de Caulaincourt compels one to favour the 6th, the date already given by Ségur and Fain.

³ The Duke of Rovigo, and Pasquier.

under arrest, and seriously wounded General Hulin, the Commandant of Paris. This conspiracy was foredoomed to failure; and at the same time that the Emperor learned of it, he also learned that all the conspirators had been arrested and brought to trial. Nevertheless the daring of the attempt, carried out at the very seat of government, made a remarkable impression on him; and he was not reassured as to its consequences, nor convinced that the government held all the guilty parties and all the threads of the affair in their hands, until three or four more despatches had come in. There were no private letters of that date, and we knew of the affair only from the Emperor, who spoke of it as insignificant, the action of a madman. On that particular day he discussed it intimately only with the Prince of Neuchâtel; and in that discussion he did not spare the Minister of Police. He was of the opinion that this incident, the undertaking of a madman, had few, if any, ramifications.

Malet, a former General, who was held prisoner in a private asylum, had formed the scheme of starting a republican revolution by means of a forged decree of the Senate and an engineered rumour of the Emperor's death. He put this scheme into action on the night of October 23rd¹ by forging orders to the Prefect of Police, the troops, and the warders of the gaols where the men were held whom he made his tools—Generals Lahorie and Guidal. These men, who according to the Minister were themselves deceived by the conspiracy at first, went to the barracks;² and the Prefect of the Seine³ had the weakness to prepare a meeting chamber for the new government. The colonels Soulier and Rabbe⁴ and a few other officers had been deceived in turn; and they brought

¹ The night of the 22nd–23rd October.

² It is hardly necessary to point out that the account given by Caulaincourt, who could not have been an eyewitness of these scenes, contains a number of inaccuracies which the reader will readily correct. Thus Lahorie and Guidal not only did not go to the barracks, but were themselves set free from the gaol by the troops from the Popincourt barracks, where Malet had himself gone to suborn the governor, Soulier. Again, Pasquier and Savary were both arrested by Lahorie, accompanied by Guidal.

³ Frochet.

⁴ Colonel Rabbe was in command of the 1st Regiment of the Parisian Guard. Commandant (not Colonel) Soulier commanded the 10th Cohort of the National Guard.

THE MALET CONSPIRACY

out their troops, and so were able to arrest the Minister and the Prefect of Police. The former had been taken in his bed by Lahorie, who took possession of the Ministry, while Guidal carried off the Prefect of Police, and Malet went to the quarters of General Hulin, military governor, who offered resistance and had his jaw shattered by a pistol-shot. However, Laborde and some other officers, recovering from their first surprise, and seeing how few the conspirators were, put themselves at the head of some other troops and released the Minister of Police and the Prefect from confinement. From that moment the Government regained the control it ought never to have lost, and the three conspirators were arrested. At Paris the incident was hardly noticed. By ten o'clock in the morning order was everywhere restored.

According to the reports made to the Emperor, the conduct of the Prefect of the Seine, M. Frochot, was blameworthy, and later information confirmed this opinion.

The Minister for War took a different view of this conspiracy from the Minister of Police.

"Clarke," the Emperor remarked, "is convinced that this is a widespread conspiracy, and that it has other and more important leaders. Savary says the opposite. At first, the rumour of my death made everyone lose his head. The Minister for War, who parades his devotion to me, did not stop to put on his boots before running to the barracks to take the oath to the King of Rome and get Savary out of prison. Only Hulin showed any courage, and only Laborde any presence of mind. The behaviour of the Prefect and the colonels is beyond understanding. What reliance," he added bitterly, "can one put on men whose early training does not confirm them in principles of honour and loyalty? I am furious at the feebleness and ingratitude of the Prefect, and of the colonel of the Paris regiment, one of my old soldiers, whose fortune I have made."

These early particulars made the Emperor eager for the next despatch, to discover the result of the inquiries they were conducting.

"This revolt," he said, "cannot be the work of one man."

On the way to Pnewo¹ he was repeatedly asking me if I could see the courier. The details ultimately confirmed what the Duke of Rovigo reported. General Clarke, however, continued to see behind this incident a widespread conspiracy and his report continued to occupy the Emperor's mind. The behaviour of those involved in the affair exasperated him so that he talked of it continually.

"Rabbe is a fool," he said to me. "A seal and some nice embossing would take him in. But Frochot is a man of brains and quick intelligence. How was he tricked, and dragged into it? He's an old Jacobin. The Republic must have tempted him again.² He is used to revolutions: I don't suppose this one surprised him any more than the ten he's seen already. My death may have seemed quite probable; and he must have considered how to keep his post before he thought of his duty. In his time he must have taken twenty oaths of allegiance; and he forgot the one that bound him to my dynasty as he forgot the others. But to be chief magistrate of Paris, and yet not resist the preparation of a council-chamber for the conspirators in the Hôtel de Ville, in his own official quarters, not make a single inquiry, not take a single opposing step, not even make a gesture to uphold the authority of his lawful sovereign—he must be in the plot.³ Such credulity would be incredible in a man like Frochot. Cambacérès and Savary made a great mistake in not having him arrested. He is more of a traitor than Malet. Malet was always hatching plots; I have already pardoned him four times; with him, plotting is a vocation; my mercy weighed on him. He is a madman.⁴ But Frochot—he sits in the Council of State, he is chief administrator of the principal department in France, he is a

¹ A manor near Slobpneva, at which the Imperial headquarters were established in the early afternoon of November 7th.

² Frochot, member for Châtillon-sur-Seine in the Estates General of 1789, had been intimate with Mirabeau and was one of the executors of his will.

³ See Pasquier, *Mémoires*, II, 29.

⁴ In June 1804, when Malet commanded the troops at Angoulême, the Prefect requested that he should be cashiered. The First Consul was content to change his station, and sent him to Sables-d'Olonne. On March 2, 1805, Malet was put on the retired list on account of further brushes with the civil authority in La Vendée. He appealed to the Emperor, who recalled him to active service on August 26th. On May 31, 1806 he was retired on account of financial

man on whom I have loaded honours. In him such baseness and treachery are revolting! He did not have to fear starvation if he lost his post. Now he has lost his honour. Does he value that less than his post? Even if Malet had made him Prime Minister, it wouldn't have saved him from the disgrace of having betrayed his duty and his benefactor. I know that one cannot always rely on men who turn the profession of arms into a trade, a speculation, and will serve any man at all who pays them with office for the dangers they run; but this man is a leading magistrate, a man with a position, a man with children to whom he should be a model of that loyalty to one's sovereign which is the prime duty. I cannot credit such baseness."¹

The Emperor was indignant, and seemed deeply wounded.

"The French are like women," he added; "one must not stay away from them too long. You cannot tell what intrigues they may be persuaded into—and what might not happen—if they were long without news of me. Yet that is what may happen if the Russians have any common sense."

Judging by other remarks that the Emperor made to me (and by what he said to Duroc and Berthier, who repeated it to me), he had revised his opinion about the Minister of Police, and understood even better perhaps than it was understood in Paris, how Rovigo came to be surprised and carried off, the conspiracy having been conceived and executed only by Malet. Clarke continued to suspect the existence of conspirators in all ranks; and the name of Frochot, who was implicated, gave some weight to this opinion in the Emperor's mind also.

The Duke of Parma² and the Duke of Rovigo were fortunately of the opposite opinion. The latter continued to represent Lahorie as a dupe, who knew nothing of the affair

irregularities, but this decree was never put into force and Malet continued to draw his active-service pay. For attempting a conspiracy against the Emperor in 1808 he was detained as a political prisoner at Sainte-Pélagie; and thence he was transferred, in June 1810, to Doctor Dubuisson's private asylum.

¹ Frochot was replaced in the Préfecture of the Seine by M. de Chabrol on December 23, 1812.

² Cambacérés.

until they came to fetch him from prison. The reports of the Prefect of Police, and of several others, were to the same effect.

[*Here Caulaincourt has made a later insertion in the manuscript, headed—"The Malet Incident: Extracts from Reports to the Emperor."*]

The Duke of Rovigo has always maintained that Malet was the sole conspirator, and that the others, even Lahorie, were merely tools. Indeed Lahorie, who in arresting the Duke had told him that the Emperor was killed on the 8th, was startled into hesitation for a moment when the Duke replied that this was impossible, or at least more than he could fathom, as a letter from the Emperor dated on the 8th had just arrived, and indeed was still on his mantelpiece.

"Then they must have lied to me," said Lahorie. He was disturbed; and it was probably on this account that he released the Minister from the hands of the soldiers and went with him to his room, on the pretext of allowing him to dress. For the Minister, hearing the noise of the panels being smashed in the doors of his drawing-room, had sprung out of bed, and was going in his nightshirt to confront the intruders at the moment when the soldiers, in spite of his protests to the officer in command, rushed upon him. Lahorie seized the papers and read the Emperor's letter, but, blinded by his hate, persuaded himself that the news of his death might be of later date.

Guidal, the Adjutant-Commandant, followed by a single detachment, took Rovigo to the gaol in a cab. Some of the picked police who were having a drink on the quay were astonished to see the Minister, their former colonel, go by in this undistinguished vehicle with a detachment of troops behind him. They ran to the barracks to notify Colonel Henry, who ordered them to mount horse. Meanwhile the Minister's secretary, M. ———¹ arrived and told him what had happened. While this was going on, they were arresting M. Pasquier and Malet was firing his pistol at Hulin, who defended himself. M. Pasquier went to join Rovigo at the gaol, where the warder put them behind bars for their greater safety, and to get them

¹ Left blank in the manuscript.

out of the hands of the soldiery. After a quarter of an hour the special police arrived and freed the prisoners. They then returned to the Ministry, while the squadron of police, in accordance with the Minister's orders, arrested the officers of Soulier's cohort, by whom the Minister and the Prefect had been carried off. Lahorie was dispossessed of the Ministry at the end of one hour, during which he had only had time to order himself a coat.¹

As soon as Frochot, who was in the country, was informed, he hurried back and found, it was said, that everything had been prepared by his staff for the new government. And he approved all they had done, instead of opposing it and taking action in the interests of the King of Rome, as he ought to have done if he believed the report to be true.

Malet had announced himself to the troops by the name of General Lamothe, who was better known in Paris than himself. When the Minister was informed of this by the declaration of the officers brought before him, he immediately sent for General Lamothe, to confront them with him in the Ministry itself. Although they had all spoken of him, not one of them recognized him: it was when they saw Malet, with whom they were later confronted, that they all exclaimed: "This is the General Lamothe who came to call us out and whose orders we obeyed."

The Minister for War thought he saw additional ground for suspicion against General Lamothe in certain passes issued by the conspirators, which were stamped with the letter "L"; but the Duke of Rovigo rightly saw in this only the initial of the word "Liberté." Thus Lamothe was saved from prison and trial.

In Malet's proclamations there was mention of MM. de Laplace, de Tracy, and several others, self-styled members of an opposition group. General Clarke wished to have them arrested also, but the Duke of Rovigo was steadfastly opposed to it. He was convinced that Malet was the sole conspirator,

¹ "As soon as he was installed in the official quarters of the Ministry of Police he sent for a tailor, from whom he ordered a minister's uniform." (Pasquier, *Mémoires*, II, 22.)

as the inquiry afterwards proved. He also regarded Colonel Soulier, commanding officer of the regiment which had carried out the arrests, as a victim of the ruse. This colonel, who had recently been promoted for his heroic defence of Mont-Jouy,¹ had, it is true, ordered his subordinate officers to carry out Malet's instructions without making any investigations; but he had only arrived in Paris two days before and was so ill with fever that he could not leave his bed.²

Although all the guilty were brought to trial and the affair was ended, the example of daring given by Malet and the behaviour of the Prefect of the Seine gave the Emperor much matter for reflection. He was particularly concerned about the inevitable effect of the incident in Europe. The demonstrable possibility of such an attempt, although its outcome had also shown that it could not succeed, seemed to him in itself a serious blow to his authority, a source of trouble and further attempts on the part of a few hotheads in English pay. At Paris, he would have forgotten the matter in a day; at 600 leagues' distance, and at a moment when the world might be for some time without news of him or of the army, the affair was bound to cause anxiety. Other intriguers might be tempted when they saw what one man, his plans laid in the solitude of his prison, could achieve within a quarter of an hour of leaving it, with no help but a false rumour, and in the heart of the capital, under a stable government and an alert administration. Such were the thoughts which crowded upon the Emperor's mind, and upon ours; and our circumstances were bound to give them added importance.

The news of grave events which arrived to beset the Emperor at Mikhaïlewska have interrupted my account of the military dispositions which he ordered. I mentioned that he directed the Duke of Belluno to recapture Polotsk, and announced his own intention of taking up a position at Smolensk. On the 7th the Emperor, as part of this plan, moved Eugène off the route and sent him towards Dukhovch-

¹ In Spain.

² See Rovigo's *Mémoires*, Garnier's ed., IV, 100.

THE EMPEROR'S IMPRESSIONS

tina, so that he should later find himself in line;¹ but meanwhile the troops commanded by Baraguey d'Hilliers, which he believed to be at Yelnia, were retiring to Smolensk,² and the Duke of Elchingen was engaged in a brisk conflict before Dorogobouje.³

Platow was following Prince Eugène, and Kutusoff, as we learned at Smolensk, was marching parallel with us, by Ermakova, towards Yelnia. For several days the Emperor had discussed his plan of going into quarters at Smolensk; but on that day he announced openly that the army would do so at Witepsk and Orcha.

On the 7th, we were at Pnewo. The cold was becoming more and more intense, but everyone thought we were coming to the end of want, and so to the end of our worst misfortunes, when we reached the stores of Smolensk and the quarters that the Emperor announced. Every face looked brighter. The sight of a consignment of provisions on its way from Smolensk to Ney's rear-guard reminded us of happier days and happier outlooks; it lifted the hearts of the most discouraged. Everyone believed there was plenty at Smolensk, and that we were making harbour. The Emperor most of all flattered himself with this idea, and spoke of it several times. He already imagined his army in line. The cold had been severe, and continued so, but the weather was clear and the sun shone. In everyone's mind Smolensk stood for an end of privation. Yet all the way from Mikhaïlewska the sight of the road was made horrible by the bodies of the wounded who had been sent back, numbers of whom were found dead of cold or hunger, or abandoned by those charged with moving them. The road was also covered with stragglers, though on this day

¹ Dukhovchtina lies to the north of the route of the main army, between Dorogobouje and Witepsk. This order had been given the day before. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19325; the Emperor to Berthier, Dorogobouje, November 6, 1812.)

² As early as the 6th, Napoleon had written: "General Baraguay d'Hilliers, who was at Yelnia, must have set out this morning on a similar movement of concentration towards Smolensk." (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19324; the Emperor to Berthier, Dorogobouje, November 6, 1812.)

³ On the 6th, the rear-guard under Ney was attacked in the narrow section of road at Samlowo. (*De Fezensac, Journal de la campagne de Russie*, Paris, p. 80.)

there was less disorder. Some of the soldiers rallied round their flags so as to share in the anticipated distributions of rations. The Emperor observed this, and it gave him a momentary consolation. Late in the day the weather became damper, looking like a thaw, which made the way harder for the artillery and the transports. Luckily the frost set in again; for they would all have been bogged if the road had broken up. Meanwhile the Viceroy, marching towards Witepsk, was close pressed by Platow and his horde of Cossacks.

On the 8th, headquarters were at Beredikino.¹ For a moment the Emperor thought of pushing forward as far as Smolensk himself; but the surface of the snow had been first melted in the thaw and then frozen when the frost set in again, and this made the road impracticable, particularly in the dark. The fear that by leaving he might draw after him the swarms of stragglers, and so cause disorder in the night at Smolensk, made the Emperor decide to wait till the following day; and in this he was well-advised, for even those on foot were hard put to it to hold the road. One can imagine the state of the horses, none of them shod as this climate demanded. Already weakened with fatigue and hunger, they kept falling down and could find no grip to rise again. After vain struggling they lay where they fell, and it was impossible to coax them to any further effort to get them to their feet. The slipperiness of the road forced us to abandon a great number. And from that arose the greatest disasters of the retreat.

Nearly everybody travelled on foot. The Emperor followed the march of the Guard in his carriage, accompanied by the Prince of Neuchâtel; but he got down two or three times a day and went on foot for a time, leaning sometimes on the Prince's arm, sometimes on mine, sometimes on one of his aides-de-camp. The road and the verges were covered with the bodies of wounded men who had died of cold and hunger and want. No field of battle ever bore so fearful an aspect. Yet, as I say, in spite of our misfortunes and these scenes of horror, the sight of the spires of Smolensk, showing through

¹ Or Ghoredikino, a posting-station outside Smolensk. The Emperor arrived there on the 8th at two in the afternoon.

clear weather and lit with sunlight, had put heart into even those most weighed down with misery. Many had regained their spirits. This indifference must doubtless be put down to the danger in which every individual stood, stifling the pity that in other circumstances must have been stirred by the unhappy sights before their eyes.

On the 9th, about noon, we came again within sight of Smolensk. The Emperor, who had already arranged in advance the dispositions of troops which the circumstances demanded, occupied himself with the distribution of rations that were to be made to the army. Unfortunately the state of the stores bore no relation to his hopes or to our needs, but as few men had rejoined their units the disorder enabled us to satisfy all those who had. That was the essential thing to ensure, for these brave men had every need of encouragement. The number of these brave and loyal soldiers was not, alas, very great. General Charpentier, the Governor,¹ had been poorly supported by the local administrations and the commanders of the troops, and had been able to gather in only scanty supplies, in spite of this fertile country being still inhabited and its people being not, in the main, ill-disposed if they were not too much molested. The Governor had known of our retreat only five days before² and had taken all possible steps to bake for the rear-guard and supply their other needs, to whom everything had in due course been sent. He had few bakers, and the rapid movements of the army had prevented his executives (who, in any case, existed virtually only in name) from making arrangements for baking in advance; and thus we could not take full advantage of even such resources as the town could have furnished. Everyone thought of his own safety; and marching as quickly as possible seemed the great secret of escaping danger. How could one obtain organized service

¹ Henri-François-Marie Charpentier, who was born on June 23, 1769, at Soissons, and appointed Général de Division on February 16, 1804, had been in the course of this campaign Chief-of-Staff of the 4th Corps, Governor of Witepsk, and lastly, after the departure of Baraguey d'Hilliers, Governor of Smolensk. He died on October 14, 1831, at Oigny, near Villers-Cotterets.

² He had been notified in a letter from Berthier, from Wiasma, on November 1st. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 336.)

from the bakers and other workers so long as this frame of mind brought an extremity of disorder? Many of even the superior officers, quite destitute, set an example in this general rout, and, leaving their units, ran by themselves to the head of the column to get something to eat.

Our arrival and stay at Smolensk were notable for the fresh disasters which befell the Emperor and the army. For one may justly apply that term to an affair which, in addition to exposing our flank, deprived us of the reinforcements of fresh troops which should have restored the morale of our men and have checked an enemy as exhausted as ourselves. The Emperor must have been counting on Baraguay d'Hilliers's corps, which, newly arrived from France, he had ordered to take up a position on the road to Yelnia. But the advance-guard of this army occupied a weak position at Ljachewo, under the command of General Augereau, who had made a bad survey of his ground and a worse disposition of his troops. He was surrounded, attacked, and taken prisoner.¹ Seeing that he put out no guards, the enemy, who had him under observation and were also kept informed by the peasantry, took advantage of this omission; and General Augereau, with more than 2000 men, surrendered to an advance-guard of the Russians, of which he should have taken more than half as prisoners if only he had remembered the name he bore.² This reverse was a disaster on more than one score. Not only did it rob us of a needed reinforcement of fresh troops, and lose the stores collected at that point, which would have been very valuable to us; but it also encouraged the enemy, who, in spite of our misfortunes and the privations added to our exhaustion at Moscow, were not accustomed to such successes. The Emperor and the Prince of Neuchâtel openly attributed this incident to the lack of foresight of General Baraguay d'Hilliers, who had not, they declared, given personal attention

¹ Augereau's brigade was surrounded on November 9th, at Ljachewo, by the irregular troops raised by d'Orloff-Denissoff.

² Jean-Pierre Augereau, born at Paris on September 27, 1772, was the brother of the Duke of Castiglione. General of Brigade from May 8, 1804, he was made Lieutenant-General on January 27, 1815, and died at Paris on September 25, 1835.

to any of the dispositions:¹ and above all they attributed it to the incapacity of General Augereau. The officers who had been on the spot spoke very bitterly of the affair and made no excuse for the Generals. As for the Emperor, he laid upon this incident the responsibility for the continued retreat which he perceived was necessary: and for the abandoning of Smolensk, where, until a few days, or perhaps even a few moments, before he had hoped to establish the main base of his advance-guard while he was in winter quarters.

This incident, the loss of Witepsk² and the set-back to the Viceroy of which we learnt on the following day,³ were the first shocks which really opened the Emperor's eyes to his situation and the possible consequences of our misfortunes. From that moment he realized the impossibility of going into quarters at Witepsk and Orcha, as he spoke of doing up to forty-eight hours before. He learned also that the Duke of Elchingen, who was acting as rear-guard, had been hotly engaged by the Cossacks before Dorogobouje.⁴ Everything seemed to fall upon the Emperor at once, as though to crush him, during his halt at Smolensk. As the incidents I have just mentioned forbade his carrying out the plan of going into quarters at Smolensk he had to recall the Viceroy. The particulars he received of the losses suffered by the Viceroy in carrying out the movement were disheartening; but it was some consolation that these were at least honourable losses.

On the 9th, the 4th Corps was held up in its movement to rejoin us by the marshy banks of the Vop. There being no

¹ General Baraguay d'Hilliers was sent back to France "under the disgrace of an order-of-the-day by which he was to consider himself under arrest in his own house." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 296.) On November 11th Napoleon ordered that the division should be disbanded and sent Baraguay d'Hilliers to Königsberg. On the 13th he ordered an inquiry, and its conclusions were unfavourable to the General, who was then ordered to hold himself under arrest on one of his own properties in France. By his death on January 16, 1813, he avoided still more serious proceedings against him.

² Witepsk was taken by storm by a detachment of Wittgenstein's army commanded by General Harpe, on November 7th. This compelled the Emperor to continue his retreat by way of Orcha, instead of by the outward route.

³ On November 9th, Eugène had reached the Vop, which was in flood. Caulaincourt describes a little later on what then took place. On that day the 3rd lost 60 cannon.

⁴ Cf. Fezensac, *Journal*, 82.

bridge, the Italian Guard waded across, despite the blocks of ice and the presence of an enemy superior in numbers. The artillery was bogged, and, as the overdriven and exhausted horses could not pull it out, after several useless attempts much of it had to be abandoned. Everything had been done that courage could do when inspired by the example of a gallant and devoted commander; but it was in vain. On the 10th, attacked on every side by superior forces, the Italian infantry covered themselves with glory. In the rear they beat off Platow's swarm of Cossacks, while at the head of the line they drove into the cavalry under Ilovaïski which tried to bar their way and prevent their entry into Dukhovchtina. There the Viceroy established his headquarters, thence proceeding to Smolensk to rejoin the army.

Kutusoff's proclamation to his army, issued at Spas on October 31st, reached the Emperor during his stay at Smolensk.¹

¹ The date of this proclamation is additional proof that Kutusoff, despite the foresight for which he gave himself so much credit in the accounts published since the event, was so far from foreseeing our retreat that he did not even know of it until the 27th. One may even question whether he then believed in it. He must have been eager to publish such important news, but his proclamation is dated no earlier than the 31st:

KUTUSOFF'S PROCLAMATION

"At the moment when the enemy entered Moscow all the wild hopes he entertained vanished before his eyes. There he expected plenty and security; there he was bereft of all the necessities of life. Worn with long and incessant marching, exhausted through lack of food, harassed by our raiding parties, who cut off the few supplies that were coming to him, he lost thousands of his soldiers, who fell to the swords of irregulars and in no honourable fight. No prospect faced him but the vengeance of a nation that had sworn to annihilate his army. Every Russian showed him a hero in whom his false promises had bred both contempt and horror; indeed every rank of citizen in the constitution of our Empire has united to present an unsurpassable barrier to his efforts. After incurring losses beyond counting, he has seen at last, but too late, the folly of his hope that the foundations of the Empire could be shaken by the taking of Moscow. There remained no safety for him save in hasty flight. He therefore evacuated Moscow on the 11th—23rd of this month, abandoning his wounded to the vengeance of an angry people.

"The hideous excesses of which he was guilty in the capital are already sufficiently known, and have stamped every Russian heart with a strong will to vengeance. In the very moment of his going he showed his baffled anger by the destruction of the Kremlin. There the divine power intervened for us, and saved the cathedral and our holy shrines.

"We must hasten in pursuit of this sacrilegious enemy, while other armies,

He did everything possible to reorganize the different units, without delaying the march of the army as a whole. Many rations were distributed, and steps were taken for further distributions at Orcha and the other places which the Emperor thought were better stocked with provisions. He also busied himself with removing the little there was in the arsenal, as though the army had not already more equipment than the teams could draw, and as though these trophies, as he called whatever we abandoned, when left at Smolensk would have more value for the enemy than what we strewed every day along the roads. Clinging to the idea that he was going into quarters, the Emperor could not or would not show a trace of foresight. There is no doubt that we should have preserved much more undamaged if we had made the necessary sacrifices in time. But to two or three unfortunate horses we allotted guns and wagons that needed six; and by not abandoning one or two guns and wagons at the proper time, we lost four or five a few days later. We planned for the day only; and because we refused, as the saying is, to pay dues to the devil, we paid heavily in the end to the enemy.

It seemed as if the Emperor were expecting some miracle to alter the climate and end the ruin that was descending on us from every side. He gave his whole attention to the Guard, whom he hoped to save from the general disaster because they were still holding together. One of the Generals commanding the artillery of this corps made so bold one day as to suggest the sacrifice of a few guns, in order not to exhaust

in Lithuania, work with us for his destruction. Already he is in headlong flight. He is burning his wagons, abandoning his baggage and the treasure his impious hands have snatched from the very altars of the Lord. Desertion and famine spread confusion around him. The murmuring of his soldiers rises behind him like the mutter of threatening waves.

"While this hideous clamour escorts the French retreat, in the ears of the Russians there rings the spirited voice of their monarch. Soldiers, hear the words he speaks to you: 'Quench the flames of Moscow with the enemy's blood.' Russians, obey that solemn order. Then your country, satisfied with this just revenge, will retire contented from the field of war, and, behind its vast frontiers, take up its noble stance between Peace and Glory.

"Soldiers of Russia, God is your guide."

(*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

the teams, already overdriven and reduced below the number needed. But he was not listened to. The Generals and officers saw the evils of the situation but, just because they could see no issue, did nothing to preserve for a few days longer what they knew must in a few more days be lost. Speaking generally, they were so tired of war, craved so much for rest, for the sight of a less hostile country, for an end to these far-flung expeditions, that most of them let themselves be blinded as to the present fruits and future consequences of our disasters, by the thought that they would prove a useful lesson to the Emperor, and one that would cool his ambition. This was the common view. One can imagine its effect upon the unavoidable difficulties of our situation, which for want of checking they merely increased. One would have thought from the conduct and the indifference of many people that the lesson could not be too severe: one would not have guessed it was by the spending of French blood that misfortune instructed the Emperor. As the Emperor could see our sorry plight, living and marching in the midst of disorder and desolation, even the most public-spirited held themselves exempt from speaking about them, or indeed from taking any notice of them.

Alas, the Emperor deluded himself; and our ruin followed on his misfortune. The leaders saw safety for the future in the very extremity of our misfortune: the Emperor saw the misfortune much smaller than it was. He really still believed that he was coming to the end of his losses, that he would be able to halt and reorganize the army. This is amply proved by his fatal insistence that everything should be brought away and everything preserved, which only resulted in everything being lost. Fortune had so long showered favours on him that he could not believe she had now deserted him. The cold, though already severe, was endurable. Everyone liked to think, as did the Emperor, that it would not increase before we were in quarters. No one at that time had any desire beyond finding stores, and in them a sure supply of food. It would indeed have been at this time a cure for all our woes. It was evident we were now in better country. The Russians

had pursued us so half-heartedly, and they disturbed our march so little, by comparison with what they might have attempted, that we thought they must be in as much need of rest as ourselves. The supplies we had been able to procure at Smolensk, and the slight rise in the temperature, had lightened everyone's spirits, and restored even the most faint-hearted. Men thought they were nearing harbour, and in expectation of arriving there within a few days, they mustered all their remaining strength.

During this time I was employed night and day in re-organizing the Emperor's carriages. I had sent ahead orders for the forging of shoes with three calkins for all the horses. By means of a heavy payment I was even able to employ the workmen of the arsenal on this work during the night. By day they were working for the artillery. I stocked the carriages with all the provisions I could obtain with ready money. I had a great number of carts and carriages burnt: a measure I had already been gradually carrying out for the last ten days, as the horses gradually died. In this way I spared the reserves. The Emperor found it very hard to consent to this; and seeing his reluctance, I no longer told him anything. I took everything upon myself, and I preserved, over and above the transports for the food and the wounded, only the carriage which carried MM. de Beauvau, de Mailly, and de Bausset. This last-named had the gout.¹ I had set the example: everyone abandoned his lame or exhausted horses. In the end, after a stay of forty-eight hours, the carriages were lined up for the march in fairly good order. The horses were all shod. The farriers had worked day and night. I supervised all these details myself, and to these precautions I owed the safety of all the men in my command, who received their rations as far as Wilna.

During his stay in Smolensk, the Emperor rode out each day, visiting the town and its surroundings as though he would have liked to preserve these also. He was already gravely concerned, and became more so after the Viceroy's

¹ "Bausset has the gout. We travel on foot, and he cries out that it's murder." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 184.)

affair. The state in which he saw the army in its march through the town convinced him, I think, that our plight was worse than he had been willing to admit to himself. However, he still heartened himself with thinking that the consequences would not be so gloomy as at that time they were expected to be. He did not doubt that he would be able to put the army into quarters as soon as he had joined the Volhynia and Dwina corps. He was expecting the arrival of the Polish Cossack levies which he had announced we should find near Smolensk. Was he misled in this respect, or did he announce this reinforcement to create an illusory hope in the minds of the rest? I do not know. The fact remains, however, that in Poland they were not busying themselves overmuch about these levies. Our communications had been intercepted for several days; we had no news from France, from Wilna, or even from the Dwina corps.

These circumstances were among the Emperor's chief cares; he showed, however, a firmness of character and an impassibility which sometimes irritated those who approached him, but was calculated to encourage those who were most downcast. All those who had money (and everyone had a certain amount) found supplies at Smolensk. Provisions had arrived there from France for the Emperor's household, together with rice and many other foodstuffs for the army. The Emperor's wine-merchant, who had imported into Smolensk as a speculation a great quantity of wines, brandy and liqueurs, sold his entire stock for its weight in gold. We had already suffered so much that even the rank and file spent all they had to procure a bottle of brandy.

The Emperor left Smolensk on the 11th, after ensuring a sufficient supply of flour for the Duke of Elchingen, who, acting as rear-guard, was due to arrive that same night. We halted at Korytnia, which we reached comparatively early.¹ The road was very hilly, and so difficult that we outstripped the carriages which had left the day before. It was simply a

¹ Napoleon left Smolensk at half-past eight in the morning, and established the imperial headquarters that night in a ruin at Korytnia, six leagues from the first-named town.

sheet of ice; and the steep slopes, frequently found in that part of the country, were already littered with abandoned horses who had been unable to struggle to their feet. The leaders were so heedless, the riders and drivers of the wagons so tired, and their time so filled with marching and searching for food, that neither the artillery nor the cavalry had a single horse shod for ice. Most of our losses must be attributed to this want of shoeing: that is, to our lack of foresight. The forges had been abandoned on the road. Those of the inhabitants had been stripped of tools and bellows; our farriers had no nails, and could find neither iron nor coals. These things were so scarce that even the arsenal at Smolensk was short of them, and I had to send an escort to fetch them from three leagues away, at the risk of seeing them carried off by the Cossacks who had made the expedition against the Viceroy and were pressing us from all sides.

An hour after we arrived at Korytnia we learnt that, one league from where we were, the Cossacks had just attacked a small artillery park and the convoy of soldiers who were bringing back the trophies from Moscow: also the Emperor's carriages, which we had passed, and which had just joined this park. They had taken advantage of the moment when, the column having halted in order to double-up the teams for the ascent of one of those mountains of ice, there was a space between the front and rear of the column and the small detachments guarding it could not defend the whole of it. The Cossacks captured about ten horses and some of the Emperor's transports. These they only robbed of their contents, because the drivers in their fright had upset them into a ravine. The wagon containing the maps was among these. The Cossacks scattered everything, but took little away. Nearly everything would have been recovered had not a second set-to at the head of the column so terrified the drivers that they dropped everything that hampered their running. Our own stragglers completed the pillage; for we learned afterwards, but too late to recover the goods, that the Cossacks, on seeing some troops approaching, had immediately retired. The artillery lost half its teams; and most of the officers

attached to headquarters, myself amongst them, lost their personal effects.¹

The loss of the maps would naturally annoy the Emperor greatly, but he showed no dissatisfaction, even against his own servants. This incident made everyone more cautious, and had the advantage of bringing back to the road, for some forty-eight hours, many of those who had gone aside for food. Our situation was such that one is forced to question whether it was really advantageous to rally-in wretches whom we could not feed! The difficulty of making the scanty artillery still attached to the various units keep pace with them greatly reduced the rate of march. It would have meant covering no more than three leagues a day, and the marches were of necessity twice that length, as the time of year, in addition to military considerations, was forcing us to hurry.

During the night the Emperor sent for me, and spoke to me, as on an earlier occasion, about the necessity of his return to France. He again brought up all the questions he had already put to me concerning the army, the journey across Prussia, and the rest, and asked me if I had given thought to the plan. He was beginning to appreciate the disorganization of the army, but heartened himself with thinking that making contact with the corps which we should find on the Beresina would quickly restore order; for these troops, which were well organized, would act as a rear-guard and hold our position while he rallied the troops from Moscow. He still railed against General Baraguay d'Hilliers, to whose faulty dispositions he attributed the loss of the greater part of the corps which had been at Smolensk. He blamed the General for his being now compelled to continue his retreat and abandon the line of Witepsk-Orcha, which till then he had cherished the thought of maintaining.

The disappointment which necessarily followed on this change in the plans for winter quarters—plans that had been too confidently announced—and the effect upon the army of

¹ This incident took place at Krasnoë, which was defended by Sébastiani. Among the trophies lost was the cross of Ivan Veliki, which Napoleon had intended for the dome of the Invalides. (*Castellane, Journal*, I, 187.)

MINSK TAKEN BY THE RUSSIANS

these various incidents, were not one of the least causes of the dissatisfaction shown by the Emperor.

"Since Baylen," he repeated, "there has been no example of a surrender like that, in open country."

He talked again to me about those Polish Cossacks who should, he said, join us within a few days. He enumerated the detachments which had reinforced the Prince of Schwarzenberg and the other corps, and mentioned with satisfaction those which would follow in course, of which some had already left Wilna and others were about to start. The Emperor still flattered himself that he could restore matters, and that he could even take up an imposing attitude as soon as he had the stores of Minsk under his hand.

"With every step I take, I shall find reinforcement," he told me, "while Kutusoff, who will likewise be worn out with marching, will be getting further away from his reserves. He will be left in a countryside which we have exhausted. For us there are stores to hand. The Russians out there will die of hunger."

Alas, fate and misfortune had pursued us and tried the Emperor in every possible way. We learned soon after that the stores of which he spoke with such confidence, which he thought were the anchor of the army's safety, fell the next day, the 16th, into the hands of the enemy.¹

Although he tried to convey to others a different impression, the Emperor was painfully disturbed. The lack of news from France caused him the most annoyance, and this he did not disguise from me. We were reduced to sending off little notes to Wilna every day or two by the hand of Poles, or other people whom we tried to make reliable by heavy rewards. Often we asked no more of them than to take a trifling note to some posting-station whose communications with Germany were still open. One day we paid a Jew 2500 francs to send through a few lines to the Arch-Chancellor. M. Daru, who sent it off, took advantage of the opportunity to write a few lines at the same time to his wife: and only these arrived.

¹ Minsk was indeed taken on November 16th by Tchitchagoff, before Dombrowski's division could reach the town.

How? The Countess herself did not know. She had a letter from her husband, while the Empress had not a word from the Emperor.¹ The Police and the Post Office were thrown into a state of agitation. M. Daru's letter, which, as one would expect, was very reassuring, first delighted his family and then created a sensation in Paris. Mme Daru showed it round, and her husband's handwriting was too well known for there to be any question of its authenticity. Guesses ran wild. Of the many despatches sent off by officers in disguise or by natives of the country, only one or two reached their destination. As public affairs were mentioned only in cypher, the Emperor attached no importance to these letters except for the purpose of giving news to people in Paris and Wilna about the army and their relatives there; and they did not receive the news.

Since the Viceroy had rejoined us² we had marched in single column and by the same road. One can imagine the confusion where the road narrowed. The road was a switch-back, and a sheet of ice on which even men on foot could hardly stand upright. Every moment carts and wagons were capsized on the ice, and blocked the road. Everyone was in a hurry and no one troubled to maintain proper order. Sure of faulty obedience, and certain that any method they might establish would be only momentarily observed, the General Staff issued no instructions. As always, every freedom was allowed to the intelligence of the commanding officers, except that they could be corrected at need. The officers saw the evils of the situation, but, reflecting that as it would immediately reappear there was no point in righting it, they did nothing to check the disorganization, which consequently ran riot, because of the existing confusion and of infection from bad examples left unchecked. How indeed could one exact service, or any test of endurance, from a man whom one had to leave to starve, in weather that froze his fingers if he

¹ The Russians seized a letter from the Emperor to Marie Louise, dated from Smolensk on October 4, 1812, which has been published in the *Lettres interceptées par les Russes durant la campagne de 1812*, p. 315. The same volume contains on p. 259 an intercepted letter from Daru to his wife, dated from Smolensk on November 9th.

² At Smolensk on November 13th.

left them exposed to the air? How make any dispositions whatever during an unceasing march, and when the staff-officers have lost their horses and must go on foot to deliver the orders they carry, when all are crowded on to the same road, and flanked by Cossacks who hardly let them get ahead out of their sight? There remained not a single brigade of cavalry in a fit state to cover our movements. The exhausted unshod horses could go no further unless men dragged them by the bridle. Without taking from the Guard, who were themselves much reduced, we had not enough strength in cavalry to carry out a reconnaissance far enough or boldly enough to give us definite news of the enemy's position. Indeed we did not attempt it: and this although the Emperor on the previous day anticipated that the enemy were moving to attempt an action against us.

Several cannon-shots fired on the Guard near Korytnia by a force believed to include some infantry confirmed the Emperor in his opinion that the enemy were about to attack. We discovered later that this was Ostermann's corps.¹ He attempted nothing for the moment. We could not find a single peasant or man of any kind to act as guide. We had no means of information. Some detachments of Poles and of the Guard were sent out to scout, and returned after putting to the sword a few Cossacks whom they drove back upon a larger body, from which they were themselves obliged to retreat. They did not bring back a single Cossack to give us information about the troops in our neighbourhood. We were like men in close confinement when they are allowed to take the air; we knew nothing of what was going on around us. The Emperor had remarked to us as early as Smolensk that the success of the Russians against Baraguay d'Hilliers would go to their heads, and that Kutusoff would be forced out of his inaction. He was not mistaken; but the unity and soldierly conduct of the Guard reassured him as to the consequences of an engagement, of whatever kind it might be.

¹ The affair in question is the first battle of Krasnoë, on November 14th. The Guard made accidental contact with a corps detached from Kutusoff's army, under the command of Ostermann-Tolstoi.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETREAT

2. *From Krasnoë to Smorgoni*

WHILST we were at Korytnia, General Ojarowski entered Krasnoë¹ and there captured an Italian battalion:² that is a hundred men, for our battalions were by now hardly equivalent to a company. The arrival on the scene of a detachment of the Guard made him hastily withdraw, and he fell back on to Kutkowo.

On the 15th [November], headquarters continued the advance towards Krasnoë.³ As I have already pointed out, we were moving too rapidly for the artillery and transport. The result was that the regiments in the rear, which had been instructed to offer resistance to the enemy, were greatly delayed by the necessity of rallying stragglers and collecting together everything that had been left behind. Even the little artillery which these regiments still had, and which it was so important for them to keep, was a source of embarrassment, because of the condition of the roads and the weakness of the horses.

As we approached Krasnoë, we came into contact with Miloradovitch's army, which consisted of Ostermann's⁴ and

¹ Ojarowski, who entered Krasnoë with 1200 infantry and artillery, was driven out by the arrival of the Claparède division. Adam Petrovitch Ojarowski (1776–November 1866), a colonel in 1802, a major-general in 1807. After having organized the Drissa camp, he commanded a regiment attached to the Miloradovitch army.

² Cavalry without mounts attached to Sébastiani's regiment. This small body of men had taken refuge in a church, and had barricaded themselves in there.

³ The Emperor started from Smolensk before nine o'clock and arrived at Krasnoë at three o'clock.

⁴ Alexander Ivanovitch Ostermann-Tolstoi (1770—died at Saconnaz (Switzerland) on January 30, 1857), major-general 1798, general aide-de-camp March 5, 1814, infantry general August 17, 1817. He lost his left arm at Kulm in 1813.

Ojarowski's divisions with the addition of some cavalry, and which had taken up its position near the village of Merlino on the left of the road. The Young Guard and the Dutch section of the Old Guard under the command of the Duke of Treviso were sent to oppose this force. They checked the Russians, and held them off so successfully that our progress along the road was not interrupted.¹

The Emperor made for the place where this engagement happened, remaining there as long as things looked serious. M. Giroud, my aide-de-camp, was mortally wounded by a bullet that hit him in the upper part of his thigh.² At first the Emperor was inclined to believe that this attack was an offensive on the part of the whole enemy army; but Miloradovitch's indecision, and his withdrawal as soon as we took action, persuaded him that it was merely the skirmishing of an isolated body of troops, with the object of harassing and delaying us whilst Kutusoff advanced the main body of his army against us. On first sighting the enemy, the Emperor had sent orders to Marshals Davout and Ney to quicken their pace. He repeated these orders, and made up his mind to stop his retreat until he had more certain information about Kutusoff's movements, and about the movements of our own troops still in the rear.

Reports about the enemy forces facing us indicated to the Emperor that they were considerable; reports reaching us from the lines of march proved that our communications were being frequently cut by Russian contingents. We even knew from information given by stragglers that villages on our left,

¹ "Miloradovitch with a force of 20,000 men did not dare to bar the road. All he did was to fire a few rounds." (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 398.)

² "The Emperor's Chief-of-Staff in this day's fighting had lost Captain Giroud, an efficient and brave officer. Returning from the rear-guard, he wanted to force his way at the head of a certain number of men who'd got detached and whom he'd collected together, and was mortally wounded with grape-shot." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 189.) François Marie Giroud entered the service in May 1786, in the Légion de Maillebois, sub-lieutenant in the *Corps des Guides* of the German Army until the dissolution of this corps (9 Ventôse, year VI), lieutenant aide-de-camp to General Foulcr, October 7, 1810, captain deputy chief-of-staff in the Portuguese army, April 6, 1811. When he obtained permission to return to France on March 3, 1812, he was again Foulcr's aide-de-camp, then Caulaincourt's. He died as a result of his wounds on November 22nd. (*Archives administratives de la Guerre*, general classification.)

at a short distance from the road, were occupied by enemy infantry. All these facts determined the Emperor to stay at Krasnoë on the 16th, and prepare for a battle. Convinced that the only way of driving the enemy off and preventing them from continuing to harass us, and, at the same time, of rescuing his own troops in the rear, was to take a vigorous offensive against the Russians, thus convincing them that neither our courage nor our bayonets had been frozen with the cold, the Emperor decided on a surprise night attack. His first intention was to put General Rapp in charge, and he even gave him his instructions. Later, however, he changed his mind, and entrusted the direction of the expedition to General Roguet,¹ who attacked Ojarowski's forces two hours before daybreak on the 16th. He killed or took prisoner most of his infantry, and drove him as far as Lukino.² This successful and daring action forced the enemy to withdraw; but the Emperor, having gathered from prisoners that the whole Russian Army was in the vicinity, decided to take the offensive, there being no other means of safeguarding the Viceroy and his troops. The Emperor, who was in the plain with the troops, was uneasy about the Prince's failure to arrive; his instructions had been to follow our own progress. But he had only been able to set out from Smolensk late on the 15th, contenting himself with bivouacking at Lubnja, and had made contact with Miloradovich's forces drawn up for battle on the 16th. Stragglers, thrown back on to his vanguard by this enemy force, had been the first to inform him of its existence. His vanguard, finding the enemy in strength and in position, had been forced to wait for the main body of his troops, which the Viceroy had got into formation, at the same time quickening his pace; but being practically without artillery, he could not risk a decisive engagement with forces so superior to his own. Surrounded by a swarm of enemies, his troops carried out their duties coolly and efficiently.

¹ François Roguet, born at Toulouse on November 12, 1770, died in Paris on December 4, 1846. General of Division June 24, 1811, commanded the light infantry division of the Young Guard.

² Third battle of Krasnoë, night of the 15th-16th November. See description in *Mémoires militaires du lieutenant-Général Comte Roguet*, IV, 515.

General Guillemot, his Chief-of-Staff, was in theanguard, and rallied all the stragglers thrown back on to it. His presence of mind consolidated and saved this small body of men, though he was often cut off from the 4th Corps by enemy cavalry. The Viceroy held his position until nightfall, when he took advantage of the darkness to make his way to Krasnoë, arriving there late because he had to strike out to the right of the road.¹

The Emperor knew, from the sound of firing and from stragglers, of the attack directed against the Viceroy, whose delayed arrival made him uneasy; and he ordered General Durosnel, one of his aides-de-camp, to take two battalions of light infantry from his Guard,² with two cannons, and to go ahead of him so as to help the Viceroy to make his way through. General Durosnel, at the head of this body of troops, commanded by General Boyer,³ had barely passed the Emperor's rear-guard emplacement when he came in contact with a horde of Cossacks, who made off at his approach. He was marching to the left of the road in order to carry out his manœuvres more easily. Half-way to Katow, he saw within cannon-range a strong line of cavalry drawn up for battle on the other side of the road. Following suit, he formed his men into a square, and fired a few cannon-shots to find out the intentions of this force, which replied to his fire but took no other action. General Durosnel, aware of the importance of the diversion he had been instructed to carry out, and full of confidence in the veterans he commanded, had no hesitation in continuing with his march, leaving this body of enemy cavalry behind him. When he had almost reached a narrow pass where he supposed, from the vigorous firing that he heard, the Viceroy to be in action and the enemy in strong force, he told off three Polish lancers of the Guard to attempt a detour

¹ After his excellent flanking manœuvre, Eugène arrived at Krasnoë with the relics of his army two hours after nightfall.

² It was two squadrons of the 1st Regiment of the Polish Light Horse Lancers of the Guard, supported by a battalion of the Old Guard. See Désiré Chlapowski, *Mémoires sur les guerres de Napoléon*, p. 285.

³ Pierre-François-Xavier Boyer, nicknamed "Peter-the-Cruel," born at Belfort on September 7, 1772, died at Lardy (Seine-et-Oise) on July 11, 1851, General of Brigade March 29, 1801, and of Division February 16, 1814.

of the ravine on the left, make contact with the Viceroy, and inform him that he was on the way to assist him in reaching Krasnoë, where the Emperor awaited him.

Having come within sight of the Russians, General Durosnel had barely time to fire a round from each of his cannons, and to form his men again into a square, when he was attacked by numerous cavalry and artillery fire. The cavalry vainly attempted to break up his formation; their charges were repulsed with as much coolness as bravery. The enemy, however, was continually being reinforced, and had spread over the whole countryside. It was thus impossible to delay a retreat without risking 600 men belonging to the only regiment—the Guard, noted for its bravery—that was left intact in the whole army. He therefore began to retreat in good order. Although vigorously attacked, and pursued for a league, he carried out his movement slowly, and in so orderly a manner that at last the enemy cavalry ceased their attacks. Cannon-fire cost him several men. He rejoined the army just when General de Latour-Maubourg was setting off with his cavalry regiment,¹ with instructions to relieve him.

The Emperor, perturbed at the thought of a part of his Guard being in action and cut off from the main body of the army—no reconnoitring party sent out had been able to break through to General Durosnel's contingent—was delighted at the safe return of this detachment. He was even more delighted at the arrival of the Viceroy, who had been helped to extricate himself by the diversion created by General Durosnel, and invited him to supper, as well as the General, whom he praised several times.

This turn of events, which upset all the Emperor's calculations, and which, if the enemy had had even a little determination, might on the lowest estimate have endangered all our troops in the rear, would have overwhelmed any other General; but the Emperor was stronger than adversity, and became the more determined as danger seemed more imminent. Bracing himself against his bad fortune, he resolved to fight rather than to abandon Marshals Davout and

¹ 4th Cavalry Regiment.

Ney.¹ He reiterated his earlier orders to quicken their pace. But was the road free? And if the orders reached them, would they arrive in time?

The Emperor had expected some sort of partial attack, and could not understand the Russian tactics. He could not believe, as prisoners reported, that the whole of Kutusoff's army was concentrated in the vicinity, and ordered them to be interrogated by several persons, always convinced, as he said again and again (for instance, the evening before to the Prince of Neuchâtel, Duroc and myself), that the present attack was simply an attempt on the part of a detachment told off by Kutusoff to hold up, or at least delay, his progress, if it were impossible to make him change his course, the object being to get ahead of us and, at the same time, to muster behind us either the Moldavian Army, or reserves which the Russians probably had in this district and had been instructed by their commander-in-chief to mobilize.

"Kutusoff would never make the mistake of following behind me along a devastated road if he had not some big project up his sleeve," the Emperor said. "If Miloradovitch had even a tolerably large force at his disposal, he wouldn't have given way before a few battalions of the Young Guard."

All these considerations conflicted in the Emperor's mind with the reports of the prisoners, and with his wish to come to blows, paying with one vigorous battle (he had no doubts about his being successful in it) for the tranquillity required for his retreat.

"The distance between Junot and the rear-guard," the Emperor said again, "is so great that it is impossible to give any real help. If we stop and wait when there's nothing to eat, we risk everything, or rather lose everything, as we cannot possibly achieve the desired result in that way. How will the troops be kept alive who are left standing? It is only twenty-four hours since we arrived, and everyone is dying of hunger. If I take the offensive against the Russians, they will withdraw. I shall have wasted my time, and they will have got ahead of us."

Notwithstanding these reflections, the Guard had been

¹ Still between Smolensk and Kortynia.

ordered to retreat along the Smolensk road; strong batteries had been placed in position, and everything was prepared for a battle on the 17th. Although he had less than 20,000 men, the Emperor had decided to come to grips with the enemy, and was full of confidence in his veterans, whom he had doubtless kept in reserve for such a desperate venture. He had no doubts about his success, and believed, as in happier times, that his luck would hold.

Returning, however, on the 17th, to his original plan, he ordered the Duke of Abrantès and the Viceroy to march on to Liadouï whilst he arranged demonstrations, which he hoped would make it possible for his Marshals to get clear of the enemy. On one occasion he remarked to the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself that he had made up his mind to continue the retreat, including the Guard, if the Russians did not defend their positions on the Smolensk road. This condition was fulfilled, as Miloradovich withdrew his forces.¹ Thus the Emperor, confident that his repeated orders had reached Eckmühl and Elchingen, and that they would join us that evening or night, ordered the Old Guard to participate in the march on Liadouï. The Duke of Treviso, with some Dutch troops and the Young Guard, was ordered to hold the position until nightfall, and was joined after dinner by the Prince of Eckmühl, who, having received the Emperor's orders and sent them on to the Duke of Elchingen, had bivouacked on the 16th beyond Korytnia. But realizing how important it was to press on, he only stopped for a few hours, keeping the Duke of Elchingen informed of his movements.

While the Emperor was defying adversity at Krasnoë, and while the Russians were profiting so little from their advantages, the Duke of Elchingen, in command of the rear-guard, where there was fighting every day, only arrived at Smolensk on the 15th, in consequence of a somewhat severe action on the 15th.² He found that Smolensk had been looted, according

¹ Fifth battle of Krasnoë—"The two parties fired on each other for two hours without any decisive result being achieved." (Clausewitz, *La Campagne de 1812*, p. 65.)

² He had been engaged on that day in a violent rear-guard action against General Chakovski.

to his account by soldiers of the 1st Corps, and according to the Prince of Eckmühl's account by stragglers. The fact is that the soldiers of the 3rd Corps, who counted on finding bread, only found disorder, shops practically empty, provisions scattered about the streets, the town full of stragglers who had just finished ransacking it, no one in authority, and no preparations made for feeding the rear-guard troops. In consequence of all this, no one wanted to remain there. The commissariat authorities had fled with the staff headquarters, and had even abandoned 5000 to 6000 sick or wounded who, as we found out later, when the 3rd Army left, fell victims to the fury of the Russians.

The Duke of Elchingen, who had been instructed to destroy the artillery abandoned at Smolensk and to blow up the ramparts, had thus to find means of ensuring the subsistence of his troops as far as Orcha. This vital consideration, which inevitably prolonged his stay in Smolensk, could not in the circumstances be sacrificed to any other, in view of the fact that his troops, obliged to fight each step of their way, had nothing to hope for from the places they would pass through, as they would pass through them after everyone else. It should also be realized that the rear-guard had to march amidst the fires and general destruction which everywhere marked the track of our stragglers. Such was the situation facing the Duke of Elchingen, who had received the Emperor's various orders, and, in the evening, the Prince of Eckmühl's letter advising him of what was happening on the road, and informing him that, in order not to jeopardize his troops and give the enemy a chance of rallying, he proposed to speed up his march, and that he would be well advised to do likewise. Marshal Ney however, could not start before nightfall.¹ Threatened on the one hand by the very real danger of his troops being demoralized through lack of food supplies, and on the other of being attacked by superior enemy forces, he decided on the course of action most in keeping with his own daring and with the proved courage of his men.

"All the Cossacks and Russians in the world," he cried

During the night 16th-17th, or, more exactly, the morning of the 17th.

when he received Marshal Davout's last message, "shall not prevent me from rejoining the army."

He was as good as his word, and proved that courage like his makes everything possible.

The various considerations which led the Emperor to believe that haste was necessary have been pointed out above, as well as the course of action he adopted on a basis of these considerations. He believed that by forcing the enemy to withdraw from the road,¹ he had done everything a General could do in so difficult a situation. Obsessed with the idea that Kutusoff's object was to steal several marches on him, and that therefore the general good demanded that he should accelerate his own progress, he rejoined the Guard and his staff headquarters at Liadouï.² On the way to Liadouï he learnt from stragglers, who had been at the supply depots, that the Russians had a lot of infantry and cavalry at Dobroë. A peasant who was brought to him in the night assured him even that on the previous day he had passed a large number of Russian troops at Romanowo³—a fact which would have confirmed his supposition that Kutusoff's object was to occupy the advance posts.

The Emperor summoned me at four o'clock in the morning. After repeating what he had already told us on preceding evenings, and having reiterated the various considerations that led him to take his decisions, he expressed regret that he had allowed a gap of twenty-four hours between the departure of one regiment and another from Smolensk, and that he had not ordered Junot and a section of the Guard to start their march earlier, so as to cover Orcha. His announced intention was to speed up the pace of the retreat.

The forces left in position to cover Krasnoë had orders to

¹ It is now known that on the 17th, Kutusoff, seeing Napoleon march against him in the direction of Kutkovo, and believing that the main body of the French Army had already gone by, had abandoned his projected offensive against Krasnoë, had brought Miloradovich from the right wing nearer to his own forces, and had stopped Tormasov's advance along the road to the west of Krasnoë. Thus, by his manœuvre, the Emperor had induced Kutusoff to leave the road clear.

² After having participated in certain demonstrations against the enemy, the Emperor returned to Krasnoë on the 17th at 11 a.m. and set out again for Liadouï, four leagues from Krasnoë.

³ South of Liadouï.

await the arrival of Marshal Davout's column, it being assumed that, in view of the last orders sent to him, he would only march in conjunction with Marshal Ney. Communications had almost broken down; the despatch of orders and reports was next to impossible, or took place so slowly that they rarely arrived in time to be useful. Staff officers, having for the most part lost their horses, went on foot; and even those who had kept their horses were unable to make them walk on ice, and so arrived no sooner than the others. The frost was more severe than ever, and the road therefore more difficult; the country was more hilly, and steep descents impracticable. It is impossible to form any idea of the difficulties that the artillery and transport had to surmount on this march, or of the number of horses lost by the former. We reached our destination¹ by a road that descended so steeply, that was so sunken, and a part of whose frozen surface had been so polished by the large number of horses and men who had slipped on it, that we were obliged, like everyone else, to sit down and slide on our posteriors.² The Emperor had to do likewise, as the many arms that were offered to him provided no adequate support—a fact which will give some idea of the plight of the soldiers with their rifles and equipment, of the cavalymen whose horses, by reason of their weight, rolled faster than they did, and so came near to crushing them.

At Liadouï there were inhabitants and some food supplies.³ Chickens and ducks ran about in the courtyards, to everyone's great astonishment. We had seen no such signs of plenty since crossing the Niemen; and every face cheered up, and everyone began to think that our privations were at last at an end. I mention these details in the course of describing our grave situation, because they bear on it, and because small things have a great influence on Frenchmen, whose spirits are quick to rise and fall. In the eyes of men accustomed since Moscow

¹ Liadouï.

² "Above the little river that has to be crossed before arriving there, lay an exceptionally high plateau, its slope so slippery that the only way of getting down was rolling." (Labaume, *Relation circonstanciée*, p. 326.)

³ "It was there that we found the first Polish Jews. We were greatly cheered by seeing people in the houses." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, p. 189.)

to find only uninhabited places, devastated houses, corpses instead of living men and women, it was a great event to come upon occupied houses with something to eat for supper. The modest resources of Liadouf, combined with what money would buy in its neighbourhood, enabled a good number of men to take the edge off their appetites—men who scorned every sort of danger but who were reluctant to die of hunger, and wanted to live if only to be able to face new perils.

Cossacks kept up perpetual raids along the road, which they constantly crossed between one division and another, even, when there was a gap, between one regiment and another. Three determined men armed with rifles, however, were sufficient to keep them at a respectful distance; but wherever there was no shooting to fear, wherever transport wagons were moving along in disorder, or unarmed stragglers making their way as best they could, the Cossacks improvised sudden attacks, wounding and robbing all those whose lives they spared, and looting wagons and carriages when they came upon them.

It is not difficult to imagine the perturbation spread by such tactics, and their effect on the army's morale. What was worse, they made communications extremely difficult, not only between one corps and another, but between one division and another. The General Staff, as I have already explained, received no reports; its orders either did not arrive at their destination, or arrived too late to be of any use; staff officers, who braved every sort of danger, were frequently captured. To make any progress at all, they had to attach themselves to some detachment, halt when it halted, and advance to rejoin another detachment when it advanced. Then there was the ice! Officers who had kept their horses were unable to make them move. They dragged them along behind, finding that they made better progress on foot. To form a true idea of this tremendous drama, it is necessary to have been present when it happened, to have taken part in it. Without exaggeration, the simplest things became almost unsurmountable difficulties. All honour, then, to the brave men of all ranks, of all classes, who would not let themselves be defeated!

Never have men so severely tried acquitted themselves so well, or shown so much constancy and devotion. As dangers multiplied and, at the same time, difficulties were augmented, all eyes turned towards Orcha, which the Emperor, like everyone else, considered to be an important base. He had ordered the advance-guard to reach it as soon as possible, and had given instructions for the bridge-head to be strongly occupied.¹

We made our way from Liadouï to Doubrowna,² where on the following day³ in the morning just when we were about to set out, the Emperor learned that the 1st Corps had joined the troops he had left at Krasnoë, in position and facing the enemy, to await its arrival, and that consequently this corps had passed through Krasnoë on the 17th,⁴ the day on which it was possible that Marshal Ney had just left Smolensk. We knew nothing definite about the 3rd Corps, of which the 1st had had no news since the 6th. Not a single officer had returned. Had those sent with messages reached their destination? The Emperor was lost in conjectures. Miloradovich's remaining in his original position, and the departure of our own troops, made us realize all the dangers to which Marshal Ney was exposed.

The grave reproaches that the two Marshals have levelled against one another, the severe judgment of headquarters and the whole army in regard to one of them,⁵ make it incumbent on me to report in this connection only the Emperor's own expressions, the Prince of Neuchâtel's private opinions, and details openly given to headquarters by trustworthy persons. The Emperor and the Prince of Neuchâtel said again and again that the two Marshals ought to march in concert and support one another; that, as Marshal Ney had to make the progress of

¹ Berthier to Junot, November 17, 1812, 8 p.m.

² The Emperor started from Liadouï on November 18th at 5 a.m. and arrived at Doubrowna at 5 p.m. He stayed in Princess Lubomirska's manor-house.

³ November 19th.

⁴ Davout with the 1st Corps passed through Krasnoë on the 17th, in the evening, on his way to Liadouï, following behind Mortier. He bivouacked between the two towns. Ney, with the 3rd Corps, left the outskirts of Smolensk early on the 17th. Thus, at this time, there was a considerable interval between the two Marshals.

⁵ Davout.

his retreat depend on the obstacles with which the enemy confronted him, Marshal Davout should have modified his pace accordingly. But the two Marshals did not like one another, and, having had a difference of opinion about the looting of Smolensk, ceased to co-operate. While he was still in the hilly country round Smolensk, Marshal Davout received the order to accelerate his pace, and to pass on to Marshal Ney an order in the same sense. This he did,¹ keeping the receipt for the order he had passed on, and the report of the officer who delivered it. The officer was received ungraciously enough by Marshal Ney, who said to him that, as for the order to hurry up his departure, "all the Russians on earth and all their Cossacks would not be strong enough to prevent him passing through them." Marshal Davout proposed that he should start that evening, and informed him that he was setting off at once to relieve Gérard's division, which he had drawn up in echelon along the road² on the previous day. Marshal Ney, delayed by the necessity of giving bread to his soldiers, paid no more attention to his second message than to his first.

Marshal Davout started off as he had said he would. He stopped for a few hours only in the evening, after passing through Korytnia,³ and was off again before daybreak⁴ on his way to join Gérard's division. Hearing a loud cannonade,⁵ he advanced to investigate, and having realized that the road was cut, he at once gave Marshal Ney a detailed account of the state of affairs, and quickened his own pace. A short way on, he came upon several detachments in some disorder, belonging to the Viceroy's corps. This decided him to advance against the cannon he had heard, instead of waiting. He thought that his co-operation would have the double advantage of extricating the Viceroy and opening a passage for Ney. His determination, and the bold front of General Gérard's troops, deceived the Russians, who were in any case uneasy in consequence of the diversion brought about by the Guard's attack

¹ The 16th, in the evening.

² General Etienne-Maurice Gérard (subsequently Marshal), on September 25th took over the command of the Gudin division (3rd Division, 1st Corps).

³ November 16th.

⁴ November 17th.

⁵ Battle of Krasnoë.

that the Emperor had ordered. The enemy evacuated the road, and the 1st Army Corps rallied the whole army. This is how Marshal Davout explained the affair, and how he subsequently described it to me.

The following details represent the facts of the case as recounted by the Emperor and the Prince of Neuchâtel at the time. The 1st Corps, aware of the dangers threatening the Viceroy, who was ahead of it, quickened its pace, keeping Marshal Ney informed of its movements, but not bothering about whether he was able to follow them. The harder the Russians pressed and attacked, the more it accelerated its pace, thus carrying out the orders which Marshal Davout had received, and which he had passed on to Marshal Ney, assuming that the latter, being in command of the rear-guard and fully informed as to what was happening, would also carry them out and hasten his pace. No one expected a persistent attack, or was made anxious about the 3rd Corps by the wild shouts of the Cossacks. Marshal Davout argued that any other policy would have vainly jeopardized the fragments of regiments that still remained with him, and would not have helped Marshal Ney, as the 3rd Corps could have been destroyed or taken prisoner before he had met Marshal Ney or been overtaken by him. This version of the affair was given out during the day.

It is impossible to describe the unbridled rage and fury that was manifested against the Prince of Eckmühl. The Duke of Elchingen was the hero of the campaign, and in any case the General about whose precarious situation everyone felt uneasy. Interest in his circumstances was general, and so great that no limits were imposed in speaking of the Prince of Eckmühl, and scarcely any even when he came into the presence of the Emperor, or when he was met personally. The Emperor and the General Staff were the more ready to saddle him with responsibility for the tragic event they feared might come to pass, because thereby they justified themselves for leaving so large an interval between the departure of the two columns, the Duke of Elchingen not having been able to leave Smolensk

till the 17th. This delay, as I have already pointed out, was due partly to the necessity of baking sufficient bread to feed the corps for several days. The Duke of Elchingen took the view that it was of vital importance to provision his troops in order to prevent them from deserting, and therefore that it was not his duty to hurry. Of the last orders sent to him, one never reached him, and the other only arrived on the evening of the 16th, when it was too late for him to anticipate the time fixed for his departure. The state of our communications accounted for these delays.

The interval left between the departure of the various corps (according to its first order the 3rd Corps was to leave Smolensk on the 17th¹), proves the extent to which the Emperor deluded himself in regard to the army's situation and the dangers that threatened it. Did he flatter himself that he would once more subdue the fate to his purposes, and bring the cold within the compass of his will as he had so often brought victory? Things had come to such a pitch that resignation was demanded by the force of circumstances. To have waited at Krasnoë would have jeopardized the army without serving any useful purpose; to return there, as was proposed by certain persons, when the 1st Corps was known to have arrived and the 3rd to have been abandoned to itself, was quite pointless. Nevertheless, such a project was the expressed wish of many, although, to those who considered it, it must have seemed absurd, as Marshal Ney's fate was in fact already decided one way or the other when, so far away from him, extravagant plans for his rescue were being considered. The General Staff said openly that when he learnt what had happened, the Emperor ordered the Prince of Eckmühl to go back and march at the head of the corps which he should have supported. Such an order, however, was given on the impulse of the moment, and with the certainty that it could not be carried out when actually delivered to the Prince. He, in any case, from the beginning, had very

¹ *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19337: Napoleon to Berthier, Smolensk, November 14, 1812. Ney was given orders to blow up Smolensk on the 16th or 17th.

sensibly aimed at closing up with the corps in front of him, his own being reduced practically to nothing. It is a thousand pities that everyone was not instructed to do likewise after leaving Smolensk. The real trouble was that we had tried to keep too much artillery. Being badly mounted, the artillery held everything back, causing gaps between one corps and another, and generally delaying our progress. The sensible thing would have been carefully to distribute a certain amount of artillery to each corps before leaving Smolensk, to see that it was properly mounted, even to arrange for reserve horses, and to sacrifice all that remained. In this way the artillery would have been prevented from delaying the infantry; the Emperor would have been able to execute any movement he desired; the whole army would have moved practically as a single unit; there would have been fewer stragglers, and it would certainly have been possible to beat off all attacks on the part of the Russians, who only attacked when they were at least six times stronger than the poor starving wretches on whom they fell.

The Emperor hoped (at least, so he said) that the Duke of Elchingen would have known or have found out that the pace of the retreat had been accelerated, and would accordingly have accelerated his own pace, even though the orders to this effect had not reached him. He added that the Duke of Elchingen was known to be not far from the Prince of Echmühl's hindmost troops. But what was the point of such speculation? The Russian Army was between him and us; and we were too far away to be able to help him, or for him to be able to make a sudden break through to us. The Emperor fixed all his hopes on Marshal Ney's rare courage and presence of mind. The army did likewise. Despite this legitimate confidence in his hero, the Emperor never ceased to regret his loss, which he regarded as almost inevitable. "He will attempt the impossible," he said, "and lose his life in some desperate attack. I'd give the 300 millions in gold I've got in the Tuileries vaults to save him. If he is not killed, he'll escape with a few brave men. But the odds are heavy against him."

The Prince of Neuchâtel repeated openly, as did the

Emperor, that in spite of the most specific orders, the Prince of Eckmühl had abandoned the Duke of Elchingen. He even showed the minutes of the two orders that had been given. In fact, these orders had no bearing on the general situation, nor on the circumstances that had made it necessary for everyone to behave as they had.

On the 19th, headquarters was established at Orcha,¹ where the Emperor anxiously awaited news of the safe arrival of his vanguard. The bridge was well occupied by our troops. We had relied on the local shops, but these only sufficed the needs of the Guard and headquarters. The countryside, however, provided further substantial resources, which, though certainly a boon to the army, were also a curse, as large numbers of men who had hitherto kept their ranks left them when they found themselves amidst abundance, and went after food supplies. Of these, only very few returned. A solitary existence which held out to the men hope of getting plenty to eat, of being free, of having a covered lodging instead of a bivouac nearly always without rations, of obtaining rest and warmth during the night instead of duties made painful by the cold—all this was most attractive in their eyes. Cossacks and armed peasants captured many of these stragglers daily, as most of them had carelessly thrown away their arms in order to be able to get along more easily, and also in order not to be forced back in the ranks, where their lack of arms made them useless.

The pleasure of seeing a countryside inhabited and not stripped of all its resources hardly served to distract attention from the Duke of Elchingen, who was at this time an object of general interest. The Prince of Neuchâtel showed everyone the orders given to the Prince of Eckmühl by the General Staff, rather as if he wanted to clear himself in advance of any responsibility for whatever happened to Marshal Ney. He showed them to me. The outburst of fury against Marshal Davout was the more general in that the Emperor publicly charged him with being responsible for all the dangers that might overtake the 3rd Army Corps. The fact is, of course,

¹ The Emperor left Doubrowna at eight o'clock in the morning, and arrived at one o'clock at Orcha, where he lodged in a Jesuit convent.

that the pace should have been accelerated all along the line, and that Marshal Ney should have left Smolensk on the 16th; but the Emperor never could make up his mind when it was a question of ordering a retreat. Knowing nothing at Smolensk about where the enemy was, not being made uneasy by flank attacks, it was reasonable enough on his part to assume that the enemy was behind him, and he doubtless thought that it would be possible to hold back the Russians by slowing down the pace of his own rear-guard. Looking back in judgment, it is easy enough to condemn this or that policy which seemed best at the time. In this particular case, when the event issued from a chain of events at once grave and difficult, and each more vexatious than the last, no one has the right to put forward dogmatic opinions about the conduct of so distinguished a soldier unless he both understood and participated in the Commander-in-Chief's policy, and in the happenings in which the former was involved. It cannot be denied that once, near Krasnoë, Marshal Davout jeopardized his already weakened forces by waiting for Marshal Ney, and this without improving the situation of the latter, since the 1st Corps was now little more than a shadow of itself. No one took sufficiently into account the delays and annoyances due to the frost, which had already decimated us, and had also upset all our plans.

It should be pointed out that there was, to his everlasting glory, only one opinion about Marshal Ney in the army. To overtake us on the Krasnoë road was regarded as an impossible task; but if anyone could make the impossible possible, then Ney was the man to do it. Every map was in use; everyone pored over them, tracing the route that he would follow if courage could open a way for him. "Under such a leader, the infantry are capable of anything when they've got rid of their artillery," it was generally said; "he will return through Kiev rather than surrender." From the troopers to the Emperor, nobody doubted that if he had not been killed, he would have rallied his men. The only lingering doubt was that, thinking we were waiting for him and that we would second his efforts the moment we heard his guns, he might

persist in trying to cut a way through the enemy, and in doing so find a glorious death. What finer tribute could be paid to a soldier than this general opinion that he would successfully carry out what most men would hardly dare even to attempt?

The Emperor arrived at Orcha on the 19th, and spent part of the day on the bridge.¹ He paid a visit to the outlying parts of the town, as though he still had in mind the possibility of keeping it. Although there was no news of the Duke of Elchingen, we continued to hope. Every delay made our plight worse, and so the retreat continued. The Viceroy was put in charge of the rear-guard; and on the 20th, in the afternoon, headquarters was transferred to the manor-house of Baranoui,² a short way away from Orcha and a quarter of a league off the road. Here the Emperor learnt from a Polish civilian of the Moldavian Army's march on Minsk.³ His informant, however, was unable to tell him exactly when it had started and what progress it had so far made. All he knew was hearsay, picked up from someone else.

"Tchitchagoff intends, no doubt, to join Tormasov," the Emperor said to me, "and they'll send an army to the Beresina, or rather to join Kutusoff in this hilly country. As I've always thought, Kutusoff is leaving us alone now in order to get ahead, and will attack when these reinforcements have caught up with him. We must hurry. Time has been lost since we left Smolensk, although if my orders have been carried out I'll also have my forces mustered on the Beresina. We must get there as fast as possible, because great things may happen there."

The Emperor was greatly preoccupied, and, for the first time, struck me as uneasy about the future. Reluctantly

¹ Across the Dnieper, and just before arriving at Orcha.

² The Emperor left Orcha on the 20th, and, in the afternoon, stayed in this manor-house situated on the right of the road, four leagues from Orcha.

³ Tchitchagoff, leaving Sacken in front of Schwarzenberg, had marched through Slonim on to Minsk, which was defended by General Bronikowski with a force of only four thousand men. Minsk was occupied by the Russians on November 16th. Before seeing this civilian, Napoleon had at Orcha received Captain Konopka, who had been sent from Vilna by the Duke of Bassano, and who, thanks to a disguise, had been able to travel through the country. (*Dennée, Itinéraire*, p. 141.)

separating himself from news of Marshal Elchingen, he only left Orcha late in the afternoon. The town had yielded us some supplies, notably fodder. But what were these supplies compared with the great mass to be fed? The countryside, better even than the one round Smolensk, was far less wasted, and the inhabitants were generally in their houses.

The Viceroy, who had remained in Orcha, announced soon after the Emperor's departure that Marshal Ney had crossed the Dnieper near Variski¹ on the night of the 18th-19th, over barely formed ice, and that he had with him, besides his own army corps, four or five thousand stragglers and refugees from Moscow who had sought shelter in his ranks. The Viceroy was given orders to advance in order to make it easier for Marshal Ney to rejoin the main body of the army, and had, in fact, already done so by advancing one of his divisions.²

Never has a victory in the field caused such a sensation. The joy was general; people were drunk with delight; everyone was on the move, coming and going to tell of this return; it was impossible to resist repeating to whomever one met. Such a national occasion had to be announced even to the grooms. Officers, soldiers, everyone was convinced now that we could snap our fingers at ill-fortune, that Frenchmen were invincible!

M. de Briquerville, a staff officer, one of those sent to tell the Marshal to quicken his pace, who had been wounded in the thigh when fighting with the 3rd Corps, arrived in the evening and gave full details.³ The following were given later by the Marshal.

¹ The crossing took place at the village of Syrokorenje. Afterwards, Ney made for Gusinoje on his way to Orcha.

² Eugène marched with a division ahead of Ney, and met him a league from Orcha on November 21st at 4 a.m. (General Pelleport, *Souvenirs militaires et intimes*, II, 52.)

³ He arrived at Orcha on the 20th (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 191). Armand-François-Bon-Claude de Briquerville, born on January 23, 1785, at Bretteville (Manche), Fontainebleau, student on 3 Thermidor, year XII, second lieutenant in the 28th Dragoons on September 21, 1805, captain on June 8, 1809, major on October 5, 1812, lieutenant-colonel on June 20, 1813, colonel on April 2, 1815, put on the retired list in December 1815, died on March 19, 1844. In 1812 he was aide-de-camp to General Lebrun. His thigh was pierced by a cannon ball at Krasnoë.

In the afternoon of the 18th a thick mist prevented him from seeing an inch in front of him, and his advance-guard ran headlong into Russian batteries. There were three enemy corps with formidable artillery on both sides of the Krasnoë road and on the road itself. When he heard firing, he closed up with his advance-guard, which he overtook at five o'clock. Believing that we were waiting for him, and that the cannonade would be the signal for a general attack on our part, he renewed his own attack several times in the hope of breaking a way through the enemy. His troops fought with remarkable bravery despite a murderous fire from all quarters. After breaking through two ranks, our men seemed doomed to die under the cannon-fire of a third, without being able to overcome all the obstacles that the Russians had prepared and now opposed to their valour. Realizing that to break through was hopeless, he resumed his original position, continuing to fight until ten o'clock in order to force the enemy to keep their forces concentrated at that point. Firing then ceased, and General Miloradovitch sent a second messenger (this time a major) with a flag of truce¹ to the Marshal to propose that he should surrender. The Marshal, however, who had already made up his mind to do no such thing, and had sent out reconnaissances to explore the district as soon as he had become convinced that we were no longer near enough to help him, was confirmed in his intentions by hearing from this Russian officer that the whole French army had left Krasnoë, and was already a long way off.² He kept the major with him, and continued in absolute silence the movement he had already begun to get across the Dnieper, having reconnoitred there the evening before. Although in several places at the edges the ice was scarcely formed, few lives were lost. It was even possible to save the bulk of the horses.

When day broke, the Russians found only our spiked guns, and understood what one brave man can do with Frenchmen

¹ The first messenger had been sent on the same day, just when the fighting had begun.

² See Pelleport, *Souvenirs*, II, 49: "This messenger told the Marshal that the army corps which preceded the third had been destroyed, as also the Imperial Guard."

behind him. The Marshal, having reached the other bank of the river, sent out small detachments to go to Orcha and inform the Emperor. Only one got through.¹ Through him the Viceroy received the first news. Platow, coming from Smolensk by the right bank, and flooding the country with his mass of Cossacks, was at once informed of the Marshal's passage. He then assembled all his units together, surrounded him, harrying him continually on his march, and forced him to be constantly forming squares to repulse these raids, to shield stragglers, refugees, and such wounded as could be transported. The efforts of all the Don Cossacks were unavailing; not for a moment were the 6000 heroes of Marshal Ney stemmed or halted. The boldness of his retirement, contrasted with the so-called prudence of his colleague, was all the more widely discussed because the Prince of Eckmühl was not generally liked. Great and small alike seized the opportunity of casting their stones at him, without ascertaining whether the orders which he received, the advice he gave to Ney, or his circumstances at the moment, did not justify him. The Marshal's return entirely restored the Emperor's confidence in his star, that faith which had so often been too happy for his own, and our, good.

On the 21st headquarters were at Kamienska, seven leagues from Baranouï. The Emperor, on the way, received fresh tidings of the march of the Moldavian Army.² Count Daru, who was some distance behind the Emperor, trying to help the wounded who covered the road and filled any houses left intact, had met a Polish officer, who asked him to give this information to the Emperor, his own horse being incapable of going farther, until he could bring it himself. The Emperor asked question after question of Count Daru, and later of the officer. The latter, however, knew only that Tchitchagoff was marching on with the Moldavian Army to

¹ "The Marshal had sent off a Polish officer in the morning, who brought the news to Orcha. The Emperor had left there the night before. The Viceroy and Davout were still occupying the town." (Fezensac, *Journal*, 117.)

² On the 20th, Tchitchagoff started out for Borissov. His advance-guard, commanded by General Lambert, made contact on the 21st at the Borissov bridge-head with the Dombrowski division, which had been sent to relieve Bronikowski, but had not reached Minsk in time.

Borissow. In the evening the Emperor told us these particulars, which had given him serious food for thought.

"Shall we arrive in time?" he said to me. "Will the Duke of Belluno have resumed the offensive in time to drive away Wittgenstein?¹ If the ways across the Beresina were closed to us, something might happen to force us to make a way with the cavalry of the Guard. How far could we get this cavalry in five or six days, with the horses in their present condition, unless we successively left behind the worse? With my Guard and as many brave men as we can assemble, it would still be possible to break through. I am most anxious to know what Schwarzenberg and my troops from the Dwina have done. Maret has never lacked means of sending information: he ought to have kept them informed of the Admiral's movements."

The Emperor then spoke to me about his journey to France as of something already settled, and told me that I should accompany him, that he had no need of another captain of the Guard.²

It was now behind the Beresina that the Emperor thought he would be able to take up his position, supplies in Minsk providing the wherewithal to rally and feed the army.

"The Reggio and Belluno corps," he said to me, "will be covering the retreat within a few days; the men from Moscow will be stationed in the second line, and the stragglers will be rallied."

There was still no news from France. It was this privation that the Emperor felt most. He scarcely dared even to hope that the Polish officers and men sent to Wilna had been able to get through, and the Duke of Bassano thus enabled to send news and reassurances to France. The Emperor realized all the possible disagreeable consequences of such a silence, and

¹ Victor with the 2nd Army Corps (Oudinot) and the 9th (Victor) had attacked Wittgenstein on the 14th at Smoliany, and had withdrawn on the 15th to Czereja. On the 21st, Oudinot had marched on to Bobr, Victor remaining still at Czereja.

² In the course of various conversations that had taken place on this journey, I had asked him to take one of the Marshals with him, pointing out that responsibility for such a journey might more fittingly be confided to them. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

this realization intensified the unpleasant thoughts to which the fresh news gave rise. Disorder and disorganization had made such progress that I was far from sharing his hopes of being able, provided always that nothing happened to upset the measures that had to be taken, to rally the army in front of Wilna. The Emperor, apart from his uneasiness at the appearance of Tchitchagoff, saw his army in battle array as soon as he had joined up with his troops from the Dwina.

On the 22nd, he stopped at Tolotchine in a convent of some kind.¹ There he heard of the evacuation of Minsk, and of how General Lambert, commanding Admiral Tchitchagoff's advance-guard, had occupied the town on the 16th. The Emperor, to whom this news meant the loss of the supplies, of all the resources he had counted on since he had left Smolensk to rally and reorganize the army, was for a moment dismayed. It meant not only that he lost the resources he had counted on, but also that he must face the disturbing certainty that the Moldavian Army might already be massed in our rear instead of, as he had all along hoped, having as its objective to join forces with Kutusoff and the main Russian Army on our flank.

The Emperor's character, like steel by fire, was tempered anew by these reverses of circumstances, and this vista of danger; and he immediately made up his mind to quicken the retreat, if possible to reach the Beresina before Kutusoff arrived there, and to fight and vanquish whatever stood in his way. Instinctively adopting at the same time the line of reasoning which consoled him by putting his situation in the best light, he decided that Schwarzenberg and Reynier, hearing of what had happened, would have started to move and altered the whole state of affairs.² In any case, the concentration at Borissow of all the forces he had in that district that would certainly be brought about by the course of events would, he thought, be a great asset from the point of view of

¹ Tolotchine is seven leagues from Kamienska.

² Schwarzenberg and Reynier were fighting at this time against Sacken, who had defeated the latter at Wolkoyok on November 15th, when he was obliged to retreat the next day to Brest-Litovsk, after an unsuccessful attempt to separate the two army corps.

the safety of the army's retreat, which he realized now could not be stopped before Wilna. He was certain to find the Borissov bridge well guarded. That was the main thing. Its defence had been arranged for some time; troops were available for the purpose, and, judging by what he was gracious enough to say to myself and the Prince of Neuchâtel, he had no qualms about the matter.

In the evening, when the Emperor had lain down, and had, as so often happened, kept Count Daru and Duroc to talk with him, he began to doze, and these gentlemen, waiting to withdraw until he was well asleep, began chatting together. After a quarter of an hour the Emperor woke up and asked what they were saying.

"We were wishing that we had a balloon," M. Daru replied.

"What for?"

"To carry off your Majesty."

"Heaven knows things are difficult enough. You're afraid, then, of being taken prisoners of war?"

"No, not prisoners of war, because they won't let your Majesty off as lightly as that."

"In fact, the situation is very grave, and grows more complicated. None the less, if the leaders give a good example, I am still stronger than the enemy. I have more resources than I need to break a way through the Russian forces, if they are the only obstacle."

It was on the next day¹ that the Secretariat of State burnt their papers² in accordance with instructions given by M. Daru when we had left Ghjat, where the destruction of equipment began.

¹ November 23rd.

² What was called the Secretary of State's correspondence was very considerable; the details of army administration during the campaign alone amounted to a mass of papers. In addition, there were all the reports and projected decrees of the various French ministries, what were called portfolios, the bringing of which each week was the work of a special reporter. There were twenty-seven portfolios that had not been sent off again, and that were collected together. (*Caulaincourt's note.*) Denniée (*Itinéraire*, 145) and Ségur (*Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 259) give this burning as having taken place at Orcha on the 20th in the daytime, but Ségur gives the following fantastic description of it: "There, unfortunately, were destroyed all the papers that he (Napoleon) had collected to write the story of his life, for such had been his intention when he set out on this disastrous war."

The Emperor sent for me in the early hours of the morning, and told me of the bad news he had received:

"This is beginning to be very serious," he said.

He asked me whether it was freezing enough for the rivers and lakes to be frozen hard, and whether the artillery could pass over the ice.

"I am inclined to think not, at least as far as the rivers are concerned," I replied.

"You don't know what you're talking about. Didn't Ney cross the Dnieper over the ice, after leaving his cannon behind, when it wasn't so cold as to-day? It's going to freeze, and we shall be able to cross the Beresina marshes. Otherwise, we should have to break through the enemy, and then make a big detour. How many days of forced marches will it take to reach Villeika¹ or Gloubokoje?² The position is likely to turn critical if Kutusoff has manœuvred skilfully; and if Wittgenstein is ready to support him, or has joined forces with the Admiral. This damned sailor³ brings me nothing but bad luck. As for Kutusoff—he knows nothing about war. He is brave enough in a fight when he's on the winning side, but he knows nothing about strategy."

The Emperor told me what Daru and Duroc had said to him.

"Their balloon is not to be laughed at," he said jokingly. "On this occasion, only brave men will have a chance of saving their skin. If we can get across the Beresina, I shall be able to control events, because the two fresh corps that I shall find there, with my Guard, will be adequate to defeat the Russians. If we cannot cross, we shall try what our pistols can do. Consult with Duroc about what we can take with us if we have

Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 407) points out in regard to this assertion: "It is ridiculous to suppose that the Emperor, starting on a war, would take with him all his papers to write the story of his life, as though he expected to enjoy in Russia the most complete repose." Caulaincourt's text clears up the question as to the character of the burnt papers. See also *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19346, orders of the day dated from Tolotchine, November 22, 1812: "Baggage will be reduced."

¹ On the Villia.

² On the road from Wilna to Witepsk. The Emperor's Imperial quarters had been there from July 18th to 22nd.

³ Tchitchagoff was an Admiral of the Russian Fleet.

to try to break through across open fields without transport. We must be ready to advance to destroy everything so as to leave no trophies for the enemy. I would rather eat with my fingers for the rest of the campaign than leave a single fork to the Russians. Discuss with Duroc the business he has on hand, but tell nobody else. I have spoken only to him and to you. We should also make sure that my arms and yours are in good condition, because we shall have to fight."

The Emperor again went into great detail about his position and about the project of which he had spoken. I had a conversation later with Duroc, who told me what the Emperor had said to him and Daru. We agreed that henceforth everyone who fed in the Emperor's mess should be responsible for his own cup, plate and cutlery if he wanted to keep them. The pretext we gave was that the canteen mules were giving out.

Although the cold was still severe enough, the weather was overcast, and a thaw, or at least snow, threatened. The sick and wounded froze during the night near the bivouacs. Carelessness, and the difficulty of finding fodder and, above all, water for the horses, caused many of them to perish.¹

¹ The Emperor's carriages, still numerous and in tolerable condition, proved to me that it was not of cold that these animals died, but through lack of proper care, lack of food, and, above all, lack of drink. To water them, it was necessary as a rule to go a fair distance, and to break the ice. Then there had to be a vessel of some sort to draw the water, since the banks were not everywhere fordable. Arriving at night, where could we find a river or a well? A surface of water was indistinguishable from a surface of soil, the frost having given the same colour to everything. Ice, which had been broken with difficulty in the evening, would be frozen hard again the next morning. Thus fresh efforts had to be made. Moreover, to break it at all, an axe or an iron rod was necessary; and there was a shortage of every sort of instrument. When he arrived in the evening, a driver, half-dead with cold, would be afraid of getting lost. He would try to find some means of lighting a fire and sheltering himself, and to get hold of something to eat. When he was not too much overcome, or if the weather was not too bad, he would try to do what he could for the horses. More often than not, however, when the weather was bad, he just left them where they were, and set out next morning without the wretched animals having been unharnessed. These precise particulars explain the enormous losses we suffered. The preservation of the Emperor's horses convinced me that these losses were due to the causes I have just indicated, as the Emperor's horses were bivouacked just like the others, and were dependent, like the army horses, on whatever the postillions and grooms could get hold of when we encamped in the evening; that is, on a certain amount of bad fodder which was to be found some distance away on the sides of the road, and that could only be got at in the night and at the

M. Giroud, my aide-de-camp, who had been in my carriage since he was wounded at Krasnoë, died during the night. He had been unconscious for two days.

From Tolotchine to Bobr, where we arrived on the 23rd,¹ the road was even more thickly covered with dead horses than on preceding marches. There were also a certain number of human corpses; and at all the bivouacs a large number of men died from asphyxiation due to their having gone too near to the fire, being already frost-bitten and nearly frozen. The others groaned, but could not drag themselves away, either because they were too weak or because their hands and feet were frozen. This horrible sight made a profound impression on everyone. It was impossible to convince a poor wretch numbed with cold that fire was fatal to him, that the only remedy was movement, dry friction, and even better for the hands and feet, friction with snow. The Emperor passed through the crowds of unfortunates without a murmur or a groan being heard. How generous these Frenchmen were in their misfortune! They blamed the elements, and wasted not a word of reproach in the pursuit of glory.

The Emperor expected to overtake the corps of the Duke of Reggio.² Recovered from his wounds, he should have resumed his command eight or ten days before, and had had orders to manœuvre with the object of getting into echelon position on the Moscow road, whilst the Duke of Belluno, with what remained of his army corps joined on to that of Marshal Saint-Cyr, coped with Count Wittgenstein. The Duke of Reggio was in the Smoliany district,³ which he should have left at this time to cover our retreat and act as our rear-guard. Our lack of cavalry, and the impossibility of making use of the Guard for reconnoitring purposes on the ice, not to mention the importance of reserving it for an occasion perhaps even

risk of one's life. Except at Mojaïsk, Ghjat, Smolensk and Orcha, we found no supplies anywhere. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

¹ The Emperor started from Tolotchine at daybreak and arrived at Bobr at four o'clock.

² Oudinot, cured of his wound at Polotsk, resumed command of the 2nd Corps early in November.

³ On the 23rd, Oudinot arrived at Losnitsa, on the road from Bobr to Borissov. Victor, who had at last left Czereja, was due to arrive at Radutice on the 24th.

more critical, prevented us all the while from getting news of Kutusoff. All we knew was that Platow, who was now feebly attacking our rear-guard, had been reinforced by several battalions. The Emperor counted on the irresolution of Kutusoff, and on the time lost by Miloradovitch waiting for the Duke of Elchingen on the Krasnoë road, having given us a start of several days on the main Russian Army, and therefore time to cross the Beresina. After what had happened at Minsk, this crossing was a matter of great concern to him. It was at Losnitza,¹ where we were the next day, the 24th, that we learnt of the skirmish at Borissow,² where the bridge-head occupied by a Polish battalion had been surprised and abandoned to a detachment of Cossacks. The gallant General Dombroski, however, had arrived the night before from the Bobruisk district, and succeeded in getting back to the bridge-head with his division, defending it valiantly for ten hours against three Russian divisions. We learned at the same time that, pressed by superior numbers, he had been forced to recross the bridge in the evening, that he had retreated in perfect order, and had taken up his position on the other bank of the river, at Niemanitzza.

This unexpected news, robbing us of our only line of retreat, of the only means, along a long stretch, of crossing this river lined with steep banks and marshes, was the worst the Emperor could have received. The details given with it confirmed the news itself and also certain other particulars implicit in it. There could no longer be any doubt, for instance, about the destination of the Moldavian Army, which the Emperor had long believed to be advancing to reinforce Kutusoff. It was clear, too, that Tchitchagoff had reached Prutjany on October 30th, Slonim on November 3rd,³ and that the Russians had been in possession of the latter town since October 19th, but that Prince

¹ The Emperor set out from Bobr at 8 a.m. on November 24th, and stopped at Losnitza, 32 kilometres from Bobr, at 6 p.m.

² November 21st. Dombrowski was dislodged by Tchitchagoff's advance-guard, commanded by Lambert.

³ A mistake in the dates. Tchitchagoff took fifteen days' rest, and only resumed his journey on October 27th, recapturing Slonim on November 6th. He set out again on the 8th for Minsk, which he took possession of on the 16th.

Schwarzenberg's advance-guard had reached Wolkowysk¹ on November 7th. This last piece of news gave the Emperor grounds for hoping that a useful diversion might take place.

It looked as if we were fated in this cruel campaign to an ordeal of all the most infuriating reverses of which fortune is capable. Whatever was most calculated to upset the Emperor's plans succeeded. After having had to face the loss of all the supplies on which he had counted to meet the army's needs and to provide a means of reorganizing it, he then lost, just when it represented his only hope, the one available means of crossing the Beresina. Anyone else would have been overwhelmed. The Emperor showed himself greater than the misfortunes which had befallen him. These misfortunes, instead of disheartening him, brought out more than ever his characteristic energy; he showed what sublime courage and a brave army are capable of when they have to contend against the utmost excesses of adversity. Unquestionably, the Emperor dominated events, and showed himself still destined to dictate their course if only he would refrain from misusing his fortune, men and fame. Hope, the merest suggestion of success, exalted him more excessively than the worst reverses disheartened him. The indirect news which he received, almost at the same time as the other, of the Prince of Schwarzenberg's² successes on the 16th and 17th, revived his hopes. He had been so often loaded with fortune's favours in the most desperate circumstances that he hoped, and was soon quite confident, that the Austrians, kept in touch with what was happening by his Minister,³ would catch the inspiration of his

¹ Schwarzenberg, in pursuit of Tchitchagoff, arrived at Slonim on November 14th.

² On the 15th, Sacken attacked Reynier at Wolkowysk, and, on the 16th, ordered a general offensive against the French left flank; but Schwarzenberg, hurrying from Slonim, attacked him in the rear and forced him to retire on to Brest-Litovsk. On the 17th, Sacken was pursued by the combined forces of Schwarzenberg and Reynier.

³ The Emperor was not mistaken when he counted on the zeal of his Minister and on the sound instructions he would give to the Austrian forces, since, hearing that Schwarzenberg had been in action with Reynier, who saw that it was a suitable occasion for an attack on the Russians, and that he had defeated Sacken on the 16th and 17th at Wolkowysk and taken three thousand prisoners from him, the Minister urged Schwarzenberg to advance on to Minsk, where he could have been on November 26th. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

genius, that they would take advantage of these successes to come to our aid, and that their manœuvres would extricate us and even give us a chance of snatching a victory of sorts, which he would know how to make the very most of. With so much ability, with a character so splendidly tempered, with a soul strong enough to dominate all misfortune, he had as little inclination as he had need to indulge in self-deception—the refuge of the weak.

His confidence, his boundless optimism, was greater still in the morning when he received the Duke of Reggio's report announcing the defeat of General Tchitchagoff's advance-guard, under the command of General Pahlen, which had ventured as far as Niemanitza, and had lost, the Marshal reported, a lot of prisoners and all the equipment that the Russians had been foolish enough to bring to this side of Borissov.¹ A great deal was made of this success, and we started out for Borissov. Detachments were sent out in all directions to investigate the enemy's position and the possibility of our making a way through, and to make bogus demonstrations.

We could not understand the movements of Kutusoff, who was at this time three to four marches behind us; as we had reason to fear, even strong grounds for supposing, that he would push on as fast as he could to join the Moldavian Army so that they might act in concert, the latter not having joined forces with Wittgenstein. Marshal Oudinot reported the return of General Corbineau, at the head of his light cavalry, who had just carried out a careful reconnaissance of the Beresina's other bank, and who had been forced by recent events to swim across the river. All these particulars, and especially the certainty that Kutusoff was a long way off, made the Emperor feel more at ease. Confident that he was three days ahead of the Russian General, he believed that he understood

¹ On November 23rd, Tchitchagoff started from Borissov in the direction of Bohr, believing that in front of him there was only Dombrowski's division. His advance-guard, commanded by Count Pahlen, came in contact with Oudinot's army corps near Losnitza, and was thrown into confusion. General Berckheim, with the 4th Cuirassiers, drove Pahlen back to the right bank of the Beresina and retook Borissov, whose bridge he found destroyed.

how events were shaping, and that he was in a position to face up to all dangers and surmount all difficulties.

It is necessary here to revert to events referred to just above in order to explain certain circumstances which bear on the disastrous crossing of the Beresina.

General Corbineau,¹ in command of the 6th Cavalry Brigade of the 2nd Corps, acting under the orders of the Duke of Reggio, had been ordered on the 17th to leave the Bavarian division² with which he had been detailed off to take up a position near Gloubokoje, and to rejoin the Moscow army, there having been no news of it for three days. M. Tchernychev,³ who arrived at Plechnitsie on the 20th with a thousand Cossacks, occupied the place for a very short while afterwards, and then withdrew to a half-league away. On the 21st the French brigade proceeded on its way with the intention of crossing the Beresina at Borissow. On arriving at Zembin, the General heard some firing, and was attacked, at the same time, by the Cossacks; his rear-guard, however, impressed them sufficiently for him to be able to press forward. Further on, peasants told him that the Borissow bridge-head had been surprised, that the Polish General had not even defended the town, and that he had abandoned the bridge. This gave the Moldavian Army control of both banks of the Beresina, safeguarded its communications with Wittgenstein by the only bridge in the district, and put the French brigade between it and Tchernychev's Cossacks.

Hearing that General Tchernychev was coming from Lepel, where he had been in communication with Count

¹ Jean-Baptiste-Juvenal Corbineau, born at Marchiennes (in the Nord) on August 1, 1776, died at Paris on December 17, 1848, General of Brigade on August 6, 1811. Subsequently, on May 25, 1813, he was appointed General of Division and the Emperor's Aide-de-Camp.

² 20th Division, General Wrede, of the 6th Army Corps (Gouvion-Saint-Cyr). Corbineau's brigade had been transferred from the 2nd Corps to the 6th at the time of the Polotsk affair.

³ "M. Tchernychev had just fulfilled a mission in the neighbourhood of General Wittgenstein that had been entrusted to him by Admiral Tchitchagoff. By chance on the road, he had run into, and been able to rescue, General Wintzingerode and M. Narishkin, who as prisoners of war were being escorted by two gendarmes to France." (*Caulaincourt's note*.) Tchernychev, who had accepted the command of a Cossack regiment, continued to be the Tsar's Aide-de-Camp.

Wittgenstein, whose advance-guard he probably was, General Corbineau realized how vitally important it was to inform the Duke of Reggio of what had happened. Consequently, he made up his mind to take any risk in attempting to make contact with the Duke rather than to seek his own safety elsewhere, and stopped at the first defile on the Borissow road, keeping on the roads from Minsk and Zembin that were occupied by Cossacks. By good luck the officers and patrols whom he had sent out managed to get hold of a peasant coming from Borissow, who had crossed the Beresina near Wesselowo. Chance favoured General Corbineau's devotion. He decided on his tactics then and there. In the night, he ordered the guide to take him to the place where he had crossed the river,¹ and at midnight on the 21st he crossed at the same spot, where, though he did not know it at the time, he was going six days hence to show the French Army a means of escape; at the same spot where Charles XII had crossed the Beresina, thus extricating what remained of his brave army after his Ukrainian expedition.² The current and the floating ice, difficult to avoid in the darkness, made him lose about seventy men, although his brigade was in compact formation and marching eight abreast.

Although General Corbineau had successfully surmounted one stiff obstacle, Tchitchagoff's army, patrolling the river bank on horseback, faced him with other dangers. Fortune was kinder to him than he would have dared to hope. He avoided Plitsche, that was occupied by the Russians, and moved in the direction of Kostritza, which a Cossack regiment had left just when the French advance-guard came in at the gallop and took possession of its equipment and servants. Continuing his march with the same good luck, he came to a Russian nobleman's residence which had a good bridge over the Natcha. It was the last obstacle he had to overcome before reaching the Smolensk road, where, to his great astonishment, he ran into the 2nd Corps a short distance from Kroupki.

If the French Army had taken the same road as he did, what misfortune would have been avoided! How many lives

¹ Night of the 21st-22nd. Opposite Studianka.

² June 29, 1708.

would have been saved! But either the Duke of Reggio attached no particular importance to the details of the reports that General Corbineau made to him, and so did not pass them on to the Emperor, or the Emperor did not consider it expedient to take General Corbineau's route. The fact is that, if we had taken it, we should have gained two marches; that, by making our manœuvres seem to be directed towards Borissow, we could have avoided the Admiral altogether, and that all our losses might have been saved. General Corbineau felt this so strongly that, not content with simply making a report to the Marshal, he drew his attention once again on the 23rd, in the day-time, to the advantages of the route he had taken. If the Emperor had been aware of all these circumstances, everything suggests that he would have decided in favour of the Borissow manœuvre for the sake of the advantage of putting the Admiral quite on the wrong scent, though it is possible that Pahlen's defeat and other considerations led him to believe that a straightforward attack would enable him to get control of the Borissow bridge, and thus to cross the river more easily. On the whole, though, the probability is that he knew nothing of General Corbineau's suggestions since he never spoke of them at the time they were made, and even deplored the inconvenience to the artillery and transport section of having to make so large a detour to reach Wesselowo.

The Emperor asked to see General Corbineau on the 23rd, but, as a result of one of those trifling events which often so greatly influence important happenings, M. de Cramayel, the Duke of Reggio's aide-de-camp, left the order in his pocket, and forgot it, so that General Corbineau did not receive it till the 25th.¹ The army had already passed the road that would

¹ Despite the delay of this note, as will be shown, Napoleon received Corbineau as early as the 23rd. The latter saw Oudinot immediately after; then, on the 24th, in the morning, hurried off to make preparations for the crossing at Studianka. Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 428) publishes a letter from Berthier to Oudinot, dated November 23rd, giving orders to take possession of the Wesselowo ford as soon as possible, to construct bridges, redoubts, etc., there. Thus, from this time Napoleon's mind was made up. René-Eleuthère Fontaine, Marquis of Cramayel, born at Moissy-Cramayel (Seine-et-Marne) on July 24, 1789, student at Fontainebleau in 1805, successively Aide-de-Camp to Generals Lagrange, Macdonald and Oudinot, General of Brigade on August 12, 1839, General of Division on June 12, 1848, Senator on June 19, 1854.

have to have been taken by the time he saw the Emperor, to whom he gave an account of all the circumstances of his adventure, pointing out that precious time was being lost by making a useless detour. The Emperor did not pause when this observation was first made, but he reverted to it later, and traced out General Corbineau's route on a map. By then, however, it was too late. He spoke to me, as well as to the Prince of Neuchâtel, about the matter, grumbling that he was never told about things in time. After chatting for a few moments with General Corbineau, he sent him to Wesselowo to prepare whatever was necessary in the way of bridge construction. Without any instruments, without iron, practically speaking without anything at all (he had to pull down houses to get wood), his zeal, coupled with the indefatigable efforts of Colonel Chauveau,¹ triumphed over all difficulties. After having arranged everything, got everything working, he rejoined the Emperor at Staroï-Borissow,² where, when he had observed Niemanitza, the banks of the Beresina, the country above and below the town as well as its environs, his Majesty stopped for a few hours to give orders. The Emperor and I even went on foot to the end of the quarter of the bridge which remained intact. Reconnaissances had been sent out in different directions, and demonstrations made at different points. The country round the town was covered with the debris of General Pahlen's army corps. During the day the Emperor received a number of reports from the Duke of Belluno which set his mind at rest about Wittgenstein's movements, these being, at this particular time, of especial concern

¹ Louis-Joseph Chauveau, born at Cretteville (Manche) on September 21, 1778, Sub-Lieutenant in the 8th Horse Artillery Regiment on 15 Floréal, year V, transferred to the Guides Artillery on 9 Frimaire, year VI, admitted to the Artillery of the Consuls Guard as a Second-Lieutenant on 13 Nivôse, year VIII, Under-Captain on 15 Ventôse, year X, Major on May 1, 1806, Colonel of the 5th Horse Artillery Regiment, then in command of the artillery in the 3rd Army Corps of the main army (Oudinot). Killed at Leipzig on October 16, 1813. (*Archives administratives de la Guerre*, general classification.)

² The Emperor started from Loznitza at nine o'clock in the morning of November 25th, arrived at Borissow at five o'clock in the evening, remained there until eight o'clock, and arrived at ten or eleven o'clock in the evening at Staroï-Borissow farm, belonging to Prince Radziwill, and near to the Beresina. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 193, and Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 154.) He stayed there in the house of the Intendant, Baron Korsach.

to him. Nothing gave any indication of an intention on his part to join the Admiral, since he had not attacked the Duke of Belluno, and since he was on the Cholopednice side (of the river).¹

The Emperor had hesitated about where to cross the river. Minsk attracted him more and more because he hoped that the Prince of Schwarzenberg would have made his way there, and that, by means of a double manœuvre, the Russians would not have been given time either to evacuate the town or to destroy their supplies. He therefore summoned the Commissary in charge of the military police to get exact information about the supplies likely to be available, about the nature of the country and about recent events. He also made particular inquiries about the route through Ukoloda;² but the reports of General Corbineau, who arrived in person towards one o'clock, and further particulars from the Duke of Belluno about the extraordinary tactics of Wittgenstein, who confined himself to following his movements, decided the Emperor. He sent back General Corbineau to hurry up the bridge construction with orders to return immediately, and meanwhile made a tour of inspection of the neighbourhood. The Emperor stayed at Staroï-Borissow,³ whence he sent out various orders. General Corbineau joined us again in the night, and the artillery, baggage and different army corps were directed to advance on to Wesselowo and Studianka, to whose manor-house the Emperor proceeded with the Guard during the night. General Corbineau acted as guide.

The Emperor set off again two hours before daybreak to join the Duke of Reggio at Wesselowo. He examined the banks of the Beresina, and placed strong artillery on the side we occupied, which dominated the other side across the whole stretch of marshland. This marshland bordered the river, and was from two to three hundred yards wide. He had orders given for the fording of the Beresina to begin. Since the frost had caused the waters to go down, there was no great depth except for a stretch of from three to five yards, across which the

¹ Wittgenstein reached this point on November 24th.

² South of Borissow.

³ North of Borissow.

horses had to swim so as to be able to climb up the other bank, which was rather steep. On our side, the water only came up to the horses' bellies. Several light horses ridden by our fearless Poles crossed and recrossed without difficulty, and drove away some Cossacks prowling on the other bank, who only fired their rifles when driven beyond the marshland. Later on, there was a small engagement between the advance-guard of Dombrowski's division and a party of sharpshooters, infantry, hussars and Cossacks from Tchalitz's division,¹ who were in the houses of the hamlet of Brillowo, but who retired.

Meanwhile work was being actively carried on to finish fixing the props begun by General Corbineau, and material was collected to make two bridges—one for artillery and one for infantry. Demonstrations continued during the march all along the line. The army was massed in strength at Borissow, and then made in succession for Wesselowo. The Duke of Reggio's corps crossed the bridges before nightfall.² General Dombrowski was wounded in a trifling engagement between his division and Tchalitz's, which had been attacked in the rear and driven out of Brillowo. The 3rd (Ney) and 5th (Poniatowski) Army Corps crossed during the night on their way to support the Duke of Reggio, who, it was then thought, was going to be vigorously attacked by the Admiral.

The Emperor was all day at the bridge. His presence encouraged the sappers and the pontoon-men, who showed real devotion in getting continually into the water to mend a matchwood bridge which broke down under every gun-carriage and half-company of men. The Emperor inspected the marshland from the other bank of the river, and in the afternoon took careful observations of this position, not returning until long after nightfall to Studianka, where he slept on the 26th.

On the 27th, he was back very early at the bridge. The crossing proceeded slowly. So as not to impede the troops and artillery, stragglers and camp-followers were stopped from slipping over the bridge, as they easily would have done in the

¹ Tchitchagoff, convinced that we wanted to put him on a wrong scent, during the night recalled this division, which had at first been posted between Borissow and Studianka, on the Lower Beresina.

² At 5 a.m. (*Castellane, Journal*, I, 194.)

intervals. Wesselowo was thronged with them. The Guard and the transport wagons crossed on the 27th, in the day-time, and took up a position at Brillowo, on the other bank.

While all this was going on, the Duke of Belluno, who was covering our manœuvre, was getting into position at midday in front of Wesselowo with the Daendels and Girard¹ divisions; Partouneaux's² division, which he had left in front of Borissow, was to join him during the night. The inaction of the Admiral, who had received orders from Kutusoff to alter the direction of his march, baffled everyone. Nor was it any easier to understand the slow pace of Wittgenstein's pursuit. How had it come about that the Admiral, who had been able to observe our tactics for thirty-six hours past, had not burnt or dismantled the Borissow bridge³ so as to be easy on that score? How was it that he had not made a quick sally with some eighty pieces of cannon, and knocked us to pieces while we were crossing the river? Was he waiting for Wittgenstein? Had Kutusoff joined forces with him? Was he manœuvring in our rear? We lost ourselves in conjecture; and, it must be admitted, there was ample ground for doing so.

Before sending the transport wagons into the marshland, I had personally examined all the paths through it in the morning. If the cold, which had diminished during the three preceding days, had not become very much sharper again the day before, we should not have saved a single gun-carriage, as the soil was miry, and trembled beneath one's feet. The last ammunition wagons got bogged, although the path along which they were taken was constantly changed, because they cut or broke through the crust of hard frozen grass which served as a sort of bridge. The wheels had nothing to grip, and sank into the bottomless mud. It required all the perseverance, all the intelligence of which the men in charge of the convoys were capable, to deal with so awkward a situation. It can be said with truth that fortune was never kinder to the Emperor than on these two days: had it not been for

¹ 26th Division and 28th Division (9th Corps).

² 12th Division (9th Corps).

³ It has been pointed out above that the bridge was partially destroyed by fire.

the intensity of the cold he could not have saved a single wagon.

The Emperor, who had inspected Brillowo during the day, as well as the road leading thence to Borissow, returned to Wesselowo to see the Duke of Belluno's position. His Majesty had personally supervised the Guard's crossing of the Beresina, and did not return until a late hour to Brillowo—a miserable hamlet where headquarters had been established.¹ It was ascertained from certain marauders that Cossacks, from whom they had escaped, had appeared at Studianka in the afternoon and captured some stragglers. In the Emperor's opinion, these were Wittgenstein's advance-guard.² Was he manœuvring in concert with the Admiral to attack us on both sides? If so, it was too late for him to be successful; but for General Partouneau's blundering, which obliged the Duke of Belluno to wait for him, the whole French Army would have crossed the Beresina that night.

Since the condition of the cavalry made it impossible for us to send out strong reconnoitring parties, we were unable to find out with any certainty what were the enemy's movements. Also, although so far our troops had crossed the Beresina without being troubled by a single rifle-shot, and although everything suggested that the crossing would be completed with equal success, the Emperor's attention was fixed on Kamen. It was along this road that the enemy could stop our march, and bar our way with obstacles far more difficult to surmount than the Beresina. The Emperor had just learnt from a peasant, and the report was verified by some officers who had travelled along the Kamen road, that it was constructed on a large number of bridges built over countless small streams which traversed it, that one of these bridges, over an impassable swamp, was more than a quarter of a league long. Thus a light put to a bunch of straw would be sufficient to deprive us of this means of retreat.

¹ Napoleon crossed the bridge with the Guard on the 27th. Headquarters was established in the evening a little to the south of Brillowo, in a cluster of three huts named Zaniwski, half a league from the Beresina.

² In fact, Wittgenstein, reaching Kostritza on the 26th, had arrived at Staroï-Borissow on the 27th.

CROSSING THE BERESINA

On the 28th, in the morning,¹ the Duke of Reggio's advance-guard was attacked so vigorously by Admiral Tchitchagoff that the 3rd and 5th Corps had to come to his support. Several hours passed with honours more or less even. The Duke of Reggio was wounded.² The Emperor, who was present at the engagement, at once replaced him by Marshal Ney. A charge of Cuirassiers, carried out by Doumerc's division,³ decided the affair in our favour. In a felled wood the 7th Regiment, which had taken its place at the head of Berckheim's brigade, fell upon a column of infantry in close formation and dispersed it. The resulting disorder forced the Russians to retreat, leaving behind more than 1500 prisoners, whom I saw. These prisoners were all soldiers from the Moldavian Army.

This check to the Admiral would have made it absolutely certain that we should succeed in the hazardous operation of crossing the Beresina but for one of those events which no plans made by a human being can take into account, as they are outside all reasonable probabilities. There can be no doubt that the rest of the army would have crossed the river without difficulty, and so been saved, if Partouneaux's division, which had remained at Borissow and which was to join the Duke of Belluno during the night, had not in the darkness mistaken the way where the roads from Studianka and Wesselowo diverge. General Partouneaux⁴ and a party of staff officers, thinking that they were on the right road and that the Duke of Belluno

¹ At 7 a.m. Battle of the Beresina.

² From a shot in the side.

³ 3rd Heavy Cavalry Division, forming part of the 3rd Cavalry Corps (Grouchy).

⁴ Partouneaux's division had been left at Borissow on the 27th to hold Tchitchagoff in check. At five o'clock in the evening, realizing that the enemy was, as had been seen, interposed between it and the main body of Oudinot's army corps, which was at Staroi-Borissow, it started out, marching in brigade columns, to fight a way through. General Partouneaux marched with the right-hand, and most exposed, column. As Caulaincourt explains, he went too far to the right, and was surrounded and decimated. At daybreak, Partouneaux was reduced to surrendering with the 4000 to 5000 men who remained with him. At this news, two other brigades threw down their arms. Louis, Count Partouneaux, born at Romilly-sur-Seine (Aube) on September 26, 1770, died at Menton on January 14, 1835, volunteer in 1791, was General of Brigade from April 23, 1799, and appointed General of Division on August 27, 1803. He was made a Count under the Restoration, and appointed Commander of the First Infantry Division of the Royal Guard in 1820.

was ahead of them, were marching confidently at the head of the division so as to be able to observe in advance the position it would take up, when they found themselves in the midst of the Russians, and were taken prisoner. The enemy, informed in advance of the mistake these officers were making, and leading the division into making, had arranged matters in such a way that they would be allowed to advance. The divisional General was captured; the division itself surrendered, acting under orders of Generals Le Camus and Blanmont.¹ These particulars were learnt afterwards, for, at the time, what was a consequence of disastrous imprudence was considered to be due to stupidity and cowardice.²

The arrival of this division's rear-guard battalion,³ which had taken the right road, leaving Staroï-Borissow last, and had caught up with the Duke of Belluno during the night, increased the uneasiness to which the division's non-arrival had already given rise. This battalion had seen and heard nothing, and had found the road free. The Marshal did not doubt but that the division had got lost during the night, and would join him at daybreak. Everyone was constantly expecting to see it appear; and uncertainty ceased only about nine o'clock when Wittgenstein's force, which since the previous evening had been lying facing the Duke of Belluno, was seen to be preparing for an attack. Even then, the rear-guard battalion had

¹ Jean Le Camus, Baron Moulignon, born at Aubusson on April 7, 1762, died at Andlau (Bas-Rhin) on July 4, 1846, was General of Brigade from March 1, 1806, and was never promoted above this rank. Pierre-Marie-Isidore Blanmont, born at Gisors on February 23, 1770, died at Gisors on December 19, 1846, was appointed General of Brigade on August 6, 1811. He was Deputy for Eure in the Hundred Days Parliament. The third brigadier of the division, General Billard, was taken prisoner with his superior officer. The enemy also took prisoner General Delattre, Commander of the Cavalry Brigade. Compare Patrice Mahon, *Un pèlerinage au bord de la Bérésina*, in the *Carnet de la Sabretache*, V, 1897, 200.

² Napoleon was very hard on Partouneaux. The 29th Bulletin said: "Rumours were current that the General of Division was not with his troops, and had been marching by himself." Later, Napoleon pardoned Partouneaux. On July 14, 1813, although their father was still a prisoner, he decided that his three sons should be educated at the State's expense at the Turin lycée, whence, in 1815, he transferred them to the Marseilles lycée.

³ This battalion was the 4th Battalion of the 55th Regiment of the Line, and was commanded by Joyeux. (Gourgaud, *Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 451.)

arrived without difficulty; no sounds of fighting had been heard; the road, according to a reconnoitring party which had returned, was still free. Thus, no one imagined that a division commanded by experienced Generals could conceivably have surrendered without putting up a fight. Even supposing that General Partouneaux had been attacked by the main body of Wittgenstein's forces, there was nothing to prevent him from striking out for the river-bank, this route being still free. Was he still fighting? The engagement about to begin would indicate that he was expected, and would serve him as a useful diversion. It was on this supposition that, far from hastening the progress of the troops across the river, who were already delayed to await the missing division, other reinforcements, including even a detachment from the Guard,¹ were sent to support the Duke of Belluno, who was vigorously attacked about eleven o'clock when we were engaged in fighting Tchitchagoff.

The Emperor only heard of the surrender of Partouneaux's division at one o'clock. The notable success scored against the Admiral made some amends for this misfortune, which was kept as secret as possible at main headquarters, but which was made known at the headquarters of the Duke of Belluno, at the time severely pressed by Wittgenstein's army. Great efforts were made by each to hold this position at least until nightfall; but at last the Marshal was forced to decide on crossing the Beresina in order to save his force from total destruction.

It is impossible to conceive the appearance of the village of Wesselowo and this bank of the Beresina after his withdrawal—everywhere troops, stragglers, refugees, women and children, camp-followers unwilling to abandon their wagons and not permitted to cross the river, the bridges and paths through the fields having been reserved since the evening before for the passage of the Duke of Belluno and the troops detailed to support him. The Emperor hoped up to the last moment that the position would be held till nightfall, in which case every-

¹ Napoleon made Daendels' division of Victor's corps, which had already crossed the river, cross back again in order to reinforce the rest of the corps on the left bank of the Beresina.

thing would have been saved. But when a retreat was decided on, the Wesselowo bank at once became a scene of horror, of indescribable carnage, especially when the Russians' repeated attacks on the last troops to cross the river had driven the crowd of non-combatants to the river's edge. Everyone then rushed to the bridges, which were soon broken, as much by disorder as by the fugitives' weight.¹ We Frenchmen, unhappy spectators of these scenes of horror and cruelty, were able from our side of the river to estimate roughly the number of victims of Russian barbarism, without any possibility of saving them. Ten thousand men were lost.²

As may well be imagined, there was little inclination to spare General Partouneaux, to whose surrender this misfortune could be largely attributed. The Emperor and the General Staff, the Marshals and officers, the whole army, were more than severe in their judgment on him. "His lack of foresight," everyone agreed, "is unpardonable. The surrender of his division without a fight is shameful." The word "cowardice" was used, and his surrender compared with Marshal Ney's brave determination.

"When d'Assas faced certain death," the Emperor said, "he cried: '*Follow me, men of Auvergne!*' If Generals lack the courage to put up a fight," he went on, "they might at least allow their grenadiers to do so. A drummer could have saved his comrades from dishonour by sounding the charge. A canteen-woman could have saved the division by shouting, 'Everyone for himself!' instead of surrendering."

There is no doubt that, apart even from the very good chance we had of getting across the Beresina before the enemy started to attack, this event had an important and unfortunate influence on the whole course of events, and that the division

¹ The bridges were burnt. Eblé had received orders at daybreak to set fire to them on the 29th, at seven o'clock in the morning. He did not make up his mind to carry out these orders until nine o'clock.

² This estimate of the number of unarmed stragglers, camp-followers, refugees, women and children is not exaggerated. (*Caulaincourt's note.*) The same figure is given by the Margrave of Baden: "The total number of stragglers taken prisoner can be put, without exaggeration, at 10,000 men." (*Mémoires du margrave de Bade*, A. Chuquet, 1912, 145.) Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, says 200-300 combatants and 10,000-12,000 stragglers.

which surrendered would have been of the greatest service, at any rate in the capable hands of the Duke of Belluno, in defending his position.

During these scenes on the bank of the Beresina which we had just left, the 4th and 1st Corps were marching towards Kamen. The certainty that our progress in this direction, which could so easily have been hindered by setting fire to the bridges,¹ would meet with no obstacles was a source of great comfort to the Emperor, as was also the success scored against the Admiral; and both, to some extent, mitigated the day's disasters. Such artillery parks and transport as still remained were also moving towards Kamen. Headquarters remained one more day, the 28th, at Brillowo to attend to the reorganization of the troops, which had been through such a bad time, and generally to repair the army's morale, which had been sensibly affected by all these events.

On the following day, the 29th, the Emperor proceeded to Kamen,² where General Lanskoï, sent there by the Admiral, had appeared about noon. He surrounded a house in which were the Duke of Reggio, General Legrand and other wounded Generals and officers, as well as two officers from the Emperor's personal suite sent ahead to arrange accommodation.³ All the servants were assembled, with a number of soldiers who had gone ahead of the main army; and this handful of brave men sufficed to drive away the detachment of Cossacks. Finding that he was unable to capture the house's occupants, Lanskoï bombarded it. Two persons close to the Marshal were wounded.

¹ "There were three such bridges to cross between the Beresina and Plechnitsie. By setting fire to them the Russians might easily have stopped the whole army." (*Thiers*, XIV, 639.)

² The Emperor started from Zaniwski on the 29th, at 7 a.m. He stopped at Zembin from ten o'clock till noon, and arrived at Kamen at 5 p.m.

³ Caulaincourt is mistaken. Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 409; Castellane, *Journal*, I, 199; Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 163; Lejeune, *Souvenirs*, II, 441, are agreed in placing this scene at Plechnitsie and not at Kamen. The day before, Oudinot had been hit by a bullet and wounded in the side. In the course of the Lanskoï skirmish, a bullet fell into the room where the Marshal was, and a splinter of wood wounded him once more in the thigh. General Juste-Claude-Alexandre-Louis Legrand, born at Plessier-Saint-Just (Oise) on February 23, 1762, died in Paris on January 8, 1815, General of Division from April 20, 1799, in 1812 commanded the 6th Division, 2nd Corps. Later, he was a senator and a peer. Amongst the wounded Generals was also General Pino, of Eugène's Corps.

When our advance-guard arrived on the scene, the Russians decided to rest on their laurels for that day.

As the peasant had reported, and various officers confirmed, at a distance of half a league out of Brillowo, and for a distance of about two leagues, the road is an embankment in a marsh, which is so unstable that the greater part of the road is constructed of wooden bridges, two of them nearly a quarter of a league in length. Numerous others cross the little streams, which traverse the marsh here, there and everywhere. How could so easy a means of impeding our progress have been overlooked by the Russians? Six Cossacks with torches would have sufficed to cut us off from this means of retreat.

None of the deductions to be made from this strange lack of foresight on the part of the enemy escaped the Emperor; and he was all the more infuriated by General Partouneaux's manifestation of the same failing, which, as he said, had cost us so dear, when he reflected how easy it would have been, but for this, to make the crossing of the Beresina one of the finest and most glorious military operations ever undertaken. He added that the Russian Generals had not yet carried out a single genuinely military operation, not one useful manœuvre, without its having been worked out for them by their Government; and his opinion of Wittgenstein, whom he considered the most tenacious, and, during the Dwina campaign, the most capable of the Russian Generals, steadily declined in consequence of his muddled tactics, his indecision and the deliberate slowness of his operations in order not to risk being isolated from the Admiral. He had been saying ever since Polotsk that, given the circumstances in which we were placed, we might consider ourselves lucky in not having more capable adversaries, and so on.

On the way from Brillowo to Kamen, two mules which had fallen behind the others, from the Emperor's transport wagons, were stolen while their driver was some little way away. No one knew who had got them. I mention this insignificant fact because, in spite of the prevailing misery, it is the only happening of the kind that took place during the campaign. The respect in which the Emperor was held, the

devotion to his person, was such that nobody belonging to his suite, even one of his servants, was ever insulted. Not one murmur against the Emperor was heard in the whole course of this disastrous retreat. Soldiers were dying by the road-side, but I never heard a single grumble; and my testimony in this respect is worth something, because after Wereia I always marched on foot, sometimes with the Emperor, sometimes in front of him, sometimes behind him, but always amongst groups of men in uniform, without my riding-coat and wearing my uniform hat. Unquestionably, any discontent amongst the men would have manifested itself in the presence of a General in uniform. The individual behaviour of these unfortunate soldiers, who, lacking all the necessities of life, froze to death by the road-side, often astonished me, I admit; and I was not alone in admiring it.

From Kamen we proceeded to Plechnitsie, where the General Staff slept on the 30th. At Beresina we had lost a large number of our stragglers and camp-followers, who had been in the habit of looting everything, thus depriving the brave fellows who remained in the ranks of the supplies which they so badly needed; the gain, however, was negligible, as bands of irregulars were formed in full view of everyone with the object of recruiting fresh stragglers. All that remained of the 1st Corps was its standard and a few commissioned and non-commissioned officers surrounding their Marshal. The 4th was more than weakened, and the 3rd, which had fought so valiantly against the Moldavian Army, had been reduced by more than half its strength after that affair. The Poles were in no better case. Our cavalry, apart from the Guard, no longer existed except in the form of parties of stragglers, which, although the Cossacks and peasants attacked them savagely, over-ran the villages on our flanks. Hunger proved an irresistible force; and the need to live, to find shelter against the cold, made men indifferent to every sort of danger.

The evil spread also to the Duke of Reggio's corps, now joined on to Marshal Ney's, and even to the Duke of Belluno's divisions, which constituted the rear-guard. Finding only a countryside devastated by stragglers and by the troops

which had preceded them, no supplies, no distribution of rations, the disorganization which in these unhappy circumstances resulted from a bad example and the most urgent need attacked also those troops on which the Emperor had counted to sustain his retreat and reorganize the army from Moscow.

Cavalry officers, who had been constituted into a company under the command of Generals,¹ in a few days also scattered, so wretched were they, and so tortured by hunger. Those who had a horse to feed were forced, if they did not want to lose it, to keep some distance away, as there were no supplies at all along the road. The Guard also lost more stragglers after Kamen; but this body of men, who no doubt complained a little, but always under their breath, and who got whatever supplies were going, still made an excellent impression by virtue of their general appearance, their vigour and their martial air. These veterans cheered up as soon as they caught a glimpse of the Emperor, and the battalion each day on guard duty kept up an astonishing standard of smartness.

Thinking of this astonishing smartness of the Guard reminds me of the contrast between our men from Moscow and the troops from the Dwina² at the time when we joined forces with them. Our men, emaciated, bloodless, grimy as chimney-sweeps, enfeebled, were like spectres, although vigorous enough on the march and full of dash under fire. The others, less exhausted, better fed, less smoked by bivouac fires, seemed to us like men belonging to another race. They were alive, we were shadows. The contrast in the horses was even more striking. The artillery of these two corps was superb. The Generals and officers were well mounted, had all their equipment, and had been enjoying all the good things that can be got on campaign. At Wesselowo, the officers of the Emperor's General Staff—for instance, Duroc and myself—made more than one visit to the Duke of Reggio's kitchen, so great had been the privations to which all ranks in the

¹ Napoleon had just constituted what was called the *escadron sacré*, less to provide himself with a personal bodyguard than to provide a centre for rallying the officers who had no longer any men under them.

² Victor and Oudinot.

army had been subjected. In the engagement against the Moldavian Army, our worn-out fellows from Moscow were not behind their comrades as far as courage was concerned. In fact, as was said every day, our soldiers had more courage than strength.

When we reached Kamen, the Emperor spoke again with me about his journey to France. He did not anticipate any further obstacles to prevent the army from reaching Wilna, where he considered it would be safe, and sure of a chance to recuperate. He hoped to come upon his despatches from Paris in under forty-eight hours, and to get news of the troops which ought to be coming ahead of us from Wilna. We were almost in communication with the Bavarians. The arrival of the Polish Cossacks, whom he took to be only a few marches away, was his chief concern. He continued to believe in the Prince of Schwarzenberg's advance, and hoped that it would lead to a useful diversion for our retreat, and give us a chance to take up a position in cantonments.¹ He expected frequent attacks from Cossacks, but regarded them as unimportant, since our latest stragglers had organized themselves under leaders into powerful squads to repel them and to awe the peasants. It was common enough to see one of these small detachments of fifteen or twenty men chasing 150 or 200 Cossacks in front of them: the Emperor, then, considered himself to be out of reach of Wittgenstein and Kutusoff; and the Admiral could only follow behind us along the road, at least unless he made a detour which would cause him to lose two marches. The Emperor learned in the evening that the Admiral had in fact followed the same route as we had; and, during the night, he received the report of a sharp engagement at Tchovitzi with our 9th Corps, which constituted the rear-guard.

On December 1st, headquarters were at Staïki. We had not hitherto had such a bad lodging.² Staïki was nicknamed "Miserowo." The Emperor and the officers of the General

¹ Schwarzenberg remained at Slonim until December 14th.

² Starting out from Plechnitsie at 7 a.m. Napoleon covered eight leagues, and stopped at two o'clock at Staïki, between Nestanowtschi and Llid.

Staff had each a little niche of seven or eight feet square. All the rest of the staff were packed together in another room. It froze so hard that everyone sought shelter in this cubby-hole. When we lay down, it had to be on our sides so as to save space. We were packed so tightly together that a pin could not have dropped between us.

Moving about in the darkness, someone trod on the foot of M. de Bausset, who had been following us in a carriage ever since Moscow, suffering horribly from gout. The wretched cripple, suddenly awakened by the sharp pain that this clumsiness caused him, began to shout: "Monstrous! I'm being murdered!" Those who were awake shouted with laughter, which awoke the sleepers; and everyone—serious and light-hearted alike, and the unfortunate sick man himself—paid tribute to this momentary folly with roars of laughter. I describe this scene to show how a man is capable of accustoming himself to the most wretched circumstances, and how, just as the most trivial thing will distract him, so he can witness the greatest misfortunes almost unmoved.

After crossing the Beresina, our faces were less careworn. For the first time, Poland seemed delightful to everyone. Wilna had become a promised land, a safe port that would shelter us from all storms, and the end of all our troubles. The past seemed a dream, and the prospect of a better plight already made us almost forget the disasters that had come upon us. Weariness, immediate privations, the sight of poor devils dying every moment of cold and exhaustion—all this counted for little with the naturally gay and careless French soldier. Danger makes men egotists. Those who had survived were accustomed to seeing pain and destruction all around them. The strongest characters refused to succumb to misfortune, and tried by their calm to strengthen others who were less strong. Undoubtedly, there was plenty of suffering; we had before us a constant spectacle of fearful misery, of overwhelming distress; but the instinct of self-preservation, the feeling of national pride, and the desire to uphold national honour prevented us from taking full account of this excess of adversity. Our spirits were exalted; and we did not know,

or rather did not wish to believe, all that subsequently transpired. Yesterday's dangers, then, like to-day's and to-morrow's, were, imaginatively considered, only like the dangers in a constantly renewed battle. It was war; and, as everyone had his part to play, we were generally gay, careless, even full of raillery, as one is the day before, or the day after, or the very day of, a battle. Unquestionably, despite our sufferings, our headquarters were as good-humoured as the Russian headquarters.

We were approaching Wilna; we were in Poland, and still no despatches had arrived. The Emperor could not understand this delay, as we were very near the Bavarian corps, then stationed at Villeika.¹ This corps, under the command of General Wrede, should have left the Gloubokoje district and advanced on to Dunilowice after the 2nd Corps's retreat, but it had returned after the 19th, and was defending Wilna. This lack of letters from France, and especially the thought of the probable effect there, as well as in Europe, of the absence of all news about the army, was of greater concern to the Emperor than anything else. He prepared a bulletin² giving an account of the course events had taken, and of our latest disasters. He said to me:

"I shall tell everything. It is better that these particulars should be known through me than through private letters. Full details will mitigate the probable effect of the disasters which have to be announced to the nation."

Headquarters were established on the 2nd at Selitche, almost as uncomfortable as the day before. But we found a store of potatoes. The joy that everyone felt at being able to eat his fill is indescribable. The cold was so intense that bivouacking was no longer supportable. Woe betide those who fell asleep by a camp-fire! Furthermore, disorganization was sensibly gaining ground in the Guard. One constantly found men who had been attacked by frost-bite who had stopped, and, too weak or numb to stand, had fallen on the ground. Ought one to help them to get along, which meant laboriously

¹ 6th Corps (formerly Gouvion Saint-Cyr).

² The famous 29th Bulletin.

carrying them? They begged one to let them alone. Ought one to take them to a camp-fire (there were bivouacs with fires all along the road)? Once these poor wretches fell asleep they were dead. If they resisted the craving for sleep, another passer-by would help them along a little further, thus prolonging their agony for a short while, but not saving them; for in this condition the drowsiness engendered by cold is irresistibly strong. Sleep comes inevitably; and to sleep is to die. I tried in vain to save a number of these unfortunates. The only words they uttered were to beg me, for pity's sake, to leave them to sleep a little. To listen to them, one would have thought this sleep was their one salvation. Alas! it was the poor wretch's last wish; but at least he ceased to suffer, without pain or agony. Gratitude, and even a smile, was imprinted on his discoloured lips. What I have related about the effects of extreme cold, and of this kind of death by freezing, is based on what I have seen happen to thousands of individuals. The road was covered with the corpses of these hapless men.

The Emperor stopped for a little while at the crossing of the Villia, in the midst of a bodyguard and on an eminence overlooking a fairly wide reach of the road. I stood apart to watch the debris of our army file past. It was from here that I saw what stragglers had reported for several days past, and what we had refused to believe. Cossacks, tired of killing our stragglers and taking prisoners whom they were obliged to march to the rear, thus depriving themselves for that amount of time of the chance of daily booty, robbed everyone they came across, taking their clothes, if they had decent ones, and sending them away practically naked. I have seen cases in which they gave in exchange inferior clothing which they had taken from someone else, or from some poor wretch dead by the road-side. Every one of these Cossacks had a pile of old clothes, partly under their saddles and looking like pannels, and partly over them and looking like cushions. They can never have been raised so high on their horses before. I spoke with some of these unfortunate stragglers whom I had seen robbed quite near the bridge, and with others who had been

stripped farther away. They confirmed the particulars I have given, and added that the Cossacks, when no superior officers were about, drove them along in front of them like a herd of cattle.

On the 5rd we reached Molodetchna, where fourteen despatches from Paris¹ were received all at once, as well as despatches from all along the line and the Duke of Bassano's news about the Austrian advance and the movements of Loison's division, which was to have gone to Oschmiana.² He had no encouraging information to give about the levies of Polish cavalry. Cossacks were out of the question. The Duchy was exhausted, and particularly lacked money; and the Emperor, whose object was to give as little as possible, was for this reason deprived of the Cossacks on whom he had been counting, and whom he had daily been expecting to meet.

Lithuania had no more resources than the Duchy. Laid waste by war, it was barely able to fulfil its first quota of troops. We lacked Lithuanian Cossacks, as we lacked Cossacks from the Duchy, as we lacked all the other supports on which the Emperor had counted. Henceforth, it was clear that neither Wilna nor even the Niemen would be the end of the army's retreat, and therefore of our troubles. On that same day, three Russian peasants alarmed all the transport section. A number of infantrymen, however, rallied, and they made off, after looting two carriages belonging to Generals. As for the Cossacks, they never appeared where there were five or six bayonets near each other.

The Emperor was very busy reading his despatches from France, and everyone was glad to have news from home. In Paris there had been some uneasiness about the interruption of news from the army, but no conception of the extent of our

¹ *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 418 says: "On the 5rd, the twenty despatches which had accumulated were found at Molodetchna. These despatches contained all the letters which were written from Paris between 1st and 19th November."

² In October, Loison had been given command of the 34th Division (formerly Morand's division, 4th of the 11th Corps). This division ceased to be part of the 11th Corps on October 15, 1812. It had been in Wilna, under the command of Colonel Martini, from November 21st. Loison personally stayed at Königsberg, and did not resume his place at the head of his division until after December 8th. Cf. Colonel Frédéric Reboul, *Campagne de 1813, les Préliminaires*, I, 56.

disasters. The memory of the Emperor's exploits maintained confidence; and caused such a sense of security that the sensation produced by this long silence had been less marked, less disturbing, than there had been reason to fear.

The Emperor instructed me to send M. Anatole de Montesquiou, the Prince of Neuchâtel's aide-de-camp, to Paris to give his news verbally to the Empress.¹ His object was to prepare public opinion for the bulletin, on which he had been occupied since we crossed the Beresina, by the details that this officer would give.

The Emperor always ridiculed talk of the removal of the Ministry and of the Prefect of Police. The despatches from Paris revived the topic of the Malet affair. The Emperor appeared to be quite satisfied with the state of public opinion since this conspiracy, particularly during the interruption of news from the army. He was satisfied with all the details about the administration, in general with everything, and said as much to the Prince of Neuchâtel, who repeated his remarks to me that same evening.

The Emperor was occupied with the famous bulletin. He was still determined to hide none of his disasters in order to impress them on everyone before his arrival. Then, he said, his presence would both calm and reassure public opinion. The more overwhelming our disasters were, the more they were multiplied with every day that passed and every step we took, and the more indispensable his return to France became. He summoned me one evening, and repeated to me what I had already heard from the Prince of Neuchâtel.

"In the existing state of affairs," he said to me, "I can only hold my grip on Europe from the Tuileries."

As usual, however, in spite of any remarks I might make

¹ Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, 413) says that Napoleon sent Montesquiou off in the night of the 2nd-3rd, and consequently from Selitche. This date is confirmed by Castellane (*Journal*, I, 199). Also, the instructions intended for Montesquiou are dated December 2nd from Selitche, and states: "M. de Montesquiou will start at once." (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19364.) Ambroise-Anatole-Augustin de Montesquiou-Fezensac, born in Paris on August 8, 1788, died at Courtanveaux (Sarthe) on January 22, 1878, was made a captain at Wagram. He was promoted in 1813 to colonel and aide-de-camp to the Emperor, Brigadier-General on April 2, 1831, and was created a peer on July 20, 1841.

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE

to him, he let there be no doubt that the army was to take up its position at Wilna, and would have its winter quarters there. He counted on being able to set off in less than forty-eight hours; as soon, in fact, as he was in contact with the troops coming from Wilna, when, in his opinion, the army would run no more serious risks. He was eager to start so as to forestall the news of our disasters. It is to be noted that, for the most part, nothing was known about them. Confidence in his genius, and the habit of seeing him triumph over even greater obstacles, were such that public opinion tended to minimize rather than exaggerate such news as had transpired of our disasters. The Emperor was in a hurry to start. He thought that communications would be easier and surer immediately, rather than a few days later, because Russian partisans would not yet have had time to try, as they certainly would whilst the army was getting into position, attacks on the rear. He allowed me to make certain preliminary arrangements so that nothing should delay his departure when it was once decided.

The Emperor again asked me whether I thought he ought to give the Viceroy or the King of Naples command of the army. I said, as I had in previous conversations, that the Viceroy was the more popular in the army and enjoyed more of its confidence than the King of Naples, whose rare courage was fully recognized; that the latter, though a hero on the battlefield, was generally thought to possess neither the force of character, the sense of order nor the foresight necessary to save the remains of the army and reorganize it; that, without for a moment overlooking his services at the Moskowa and on other occasions, he had been accused of having an insatiable appetite for glory, of having instigated His Majesty to undertake the Moscow expedition, and of having lost the magnificent force of cavalry which started on the campaign; that it was no longer a question of charging the enemy, but that the present need was to provide the army with the wherewithal to live so as to reorganize it and halt the enemy.

The Emperor seemed to find my observations sound. He even subscribed to the opinion generally held about the King, but pointed out that his rank made it impossible for him to be

put under the orders of the Viceroy. Thus he was obliged to give the preference to the King, who would have left the army if the supreme command had been entrusted to Prince Eugène. He added that the Prince of Neuchâtel took the same view, that he was leaving him to see to everything, and that he preferred the King, whose rank, age and reputation would be more imposing in the eyes of the Marshals, and whose proved courage counted for something where the Russians were concerned. Certain other remarks of the Emperor which he had made formerly, and which I recollected because they cropped up again in the course of this conversation, gave me the idea (at least I fancied I could trace such a thought) that he would prefer to leave to his brother-in-law the honour of rallying the army, and that he did not care about his stepson having credit for this further achievement in the eyes of the army and of France. With all his greatness of character, this distrust of his relatives, and, in general, of everyone who had acquired a personal reputation, was entirely in keeping with the Emperor's idea of looking at things.

He spoke to me again about the persons he would take with him. His choice was limited to myself, who was to start with him, to the Duke of Friuli¹ and the Count of Lobau, who were to follow after him, and to M. Wonsowicz, a Polish officer who had been through the whole campaign, a man of proved courage and devotion.² It was arranged that the Emperor's other aides-de-camp and the officers of his suites should rejoin him in succession. Each week the Prince of Neuchâtel was to send two of his orderly officers to him.³ He was to have an escort only as far as Wilna. This would be provided by the Neapolitan cavalry, which was attached to Loison's division. Beyond Wilna, he would travel under the name of the Duke of Vicenza.

¹ Duroc.

² Count Dunin Wonsowicz. He married the Countess Potocka, formerly Anna Tyszkiewicz, the author of the *Mémoires*.

³ Regarding this, see in Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 454) a letter from the Emperor to the Duke of Vicenza, dated from Smorgoni, December 5th, ordering an orderly officer to be instructed to set out each two days, one to proceed via Warsaw and the following via Danzig. The first to start was M. de Mortemart, the second Gourgaud, the third Christin. The original of this letter is preserved in the Caulaincourt archives, file 8.

I gave orders, therefore, to the post-stages, under the pretext of making sure that arrangements existed for officers sent with despatches; but our troops soon disorganized these relays, and it was necessary to make other arrangements by sending ahead several transport detachments whose horses would serve our purpose. Our situation was such that the smallest things were liable to put obstacles, even insurmountable obstacles, in our way, unless steps were taken long in advance. For instance, we should not have been able to make use of our relays to get along the road, which was like a sheet of glass, if I had not kept under lock and key a sack of coal for the purpose of forging shoes for the horses which were to carry us.¹

The cold was so severe, even by the forge fire, that the farriers could only work in gloves, and could not remain for one moment without rubbing their hands to prevent them from freezing. These particulars, in any other circumstances quite insignificant, give some idea of the causes of our failure, and of all that would have had to have been foreseen to avoid it. Our failure was, for the most part, due rather to such insignificant circumstances than to exhaustion or attacks from the enemy.

The Emperor was well satisfied with the particulars transmitted to him by M. de Bassano regarding the tactics that he had just instructed the Prince of Schwarzenberg² to carry out, and, in general, pleased with everything this Minister had done and ordered whilst communications were interrupted. He did not, however, refer with the same satisfaction to what had been done in regard to raising the levies he had ordered in Poland. In this respect, he complained a great deal about M. de Pradt and about all his agents at Wilna and Warsaw. The promised Cossacks had not even been recruited, a fact which upset the Emperor the more in that he had been openly attributing all his defeats since Smolensk to the lack of light cavalry. Wanting to vent his annoyance, he reverted to the subject of the Turkish peace and to the union between Russia

¹ We could only do our forging at night because the transport wagons were from twelve to fifteen hours on the move each day. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

² Maret had given renewed orders to Schwarzenberg to move closer to the army.

and Sweden. The news from France, on the other hand, was a real consolation. The Emperor spoke of this with the utmost satisfaction, and with high praise for the Empress's conduct, for her prudence, and for the attachment to him that she had shown, etc.

"These difficult circumstances," he went on, "form her power of judgment, and give her assurance and far-sightedness which will win the nation's heart. She is just the woman I needed, kind, good, loving as German women are. She doesn't busy herself with intrigues. She has a sense of order, and concerns herself only with me and her son."

The Arch-Chancellor was also referred to in flattering terms, as well as the Ministers.

On the 4th, headquarters were at Bienica,¹ and on the 5th at Smorgoni, where a member of the Wilna Government and Count van Hogendorp,² aide-de-camp to the Emperor and governor of the town, awaited him.³ The Emperor interviewed them, and then at once sent them off again. He summoned me once more to dictate to me his final orders:

"Smorgoni, 5 December, noon.

"The Emperor is leaving at 10 o'clock in the evening. He is to be accompanied by 200 men from his Guard. From the posting house Smorgoni Oschmiana as far as Oschmiana by an infantry regiment, which will pass the night four leagues from here, orders to this effect to be given by General van Hogendorp.

¹ Six and a half leagues from Molodetchna.

² Dirk van Hogendorp, born at Heenvliet (Holland) on October 3, 1761, died at Rio de Janeiro on October 20, 1822, successively Ambassador at Petersburg, Governor of Java, War Minister (1806-1807) in the reign of Louis Bonaparte, then entrusted with various diplomatic missions. Napoleon appointed him a General of Division in January 1811, and his aide-de-camp in the following March. On June 1, 1812, he became Governor of Breslau. Thence he was transferred to the governorship of Königsberg. Finally, on July 8, 1812, he was appointed Governor of Lithuania at Wilna. He was designated on August 24th President of the Provisional Commission of the Government of Wilna.

³ There is undoubtedly a copying error here in the manuscript of the *Mémoires*. In fact, it was at Bienica that Napoleon received General van Hogendorp, whom he summoned from Wilna. Hogendorp has given his account of his journey in his *Mémoires*, published by his grandson, M. le Comte D. C. A. Van Hogendorp, the Hague, Nijhoff, 1887, 351.

"Five hundred good horses belonging to the Guard to be sent to a point one league from Oschmiana. Staff officers from the infantry regiment and the squadron of lancers from the Guard to be placed in relays between Smorgoni and Oschmiana.

"The Neapolitans,¹ who have passed this night between Wilna and Oschmiana, to arrange for 100 horses to be at Miedniki and 100 at Rumsziki.

"General van Hogendorp to stop, wherever he finds it, the infantry regiment due to arrive at Wilna on the 6th, and to arrange for 100 horses to be half-way along the Kovno road. Also, to see that an escort of 60 men is ready at Wilna, and the post-horses the Master of the Horse will need from Smorgoni to beyond Wilkowiski. General van Hogendorp to return at once to Wilna and to instruct the Duke of Bassano to wait upon the Emperor immediately at Smorgoni.

"The Emperor to start with the Duke of Vicenza in His Majesty's carriage; M. Wonsowicz in front, a footman behind;²

"The Grand Marshal, the Count of Lobau, a footman, a workman in a barouche;

"Baron Fain,³ the valet Constant,⁴ someone in charge of documents and a clerk in a barouche;

"The Master of the Horse to summon the King of Naples, the Viceroy and the Marshals to be at headquarters at seven o'clock. Also to take an order from the Major-General to proceed to Paris with his secretary Reyneval,⁵ his couriers and his servants."

¹ Two regiments of light infantry and of Neapolitan Guards had been sent ahead of the army from Wilna to Oschmiana with Loison's division.

² Besides this footman, the Emperor took Roustam. See *Mémoires inédits de Roustam* in the *Revue rétrospective*, 1888, VIII, 155.

³ Agathon-Jean-François, Baron Fain, born in Paris on January 11, 1778, at sixteen entered the office of the Military Committee of the Convention, then chief of the Directory's Secretariat in January 1806, appointed Secretary-Archivist of the Emperor's Secretariat, referendary to the Council of State in 1811. In 1813 he became First Secretary to the Cabinet, and died in Paris on September 16, 1837.

⁴ Louis-Constant Wairy, born at Peruelz (Belgium) on December 2, 1778, personal valet in the service of Eugène de Beauharnais in 1799, was transferred to Bonaparte's service in March 1800. He basely deserted the Emperor in 1814.

⁵ The Emperor was going to travel under the name of Count F. J. M. Gérard de Reyneval, born at Versailles on October 8, 1778, died in Spain on August 16,

The Emperor then repeated what he had already said in the morning at Bienica—that he had good news from the Duke of Taranto,¹ that the Prince of Schwarzenberg was ahead, that Loison's forces were considerable, that various regiments were arriving at Wilna and others on the Niemen; that the Wilna shops, and even the Kovno shops, were well supplied, and that the troopers, once they got hold of food and clothing, would soon rejoin the ranks. There could be no doubt, in his opinion, that the retreat and privations would end at the same time.

Having tried on previous occasions to explain the real state of affairs to the Emperor, and what I foresaw would come to pass, I listened this time without making any reply.

"Why don't you answer? . . . What is your opinion, then?"

"I have grave doubts, Sire, as to whether the Niemen will be the end of disorder and as to whether the army will rally there. All the fresh troops ought to be sent to take up their positions wherever Your Majesty thinks we can really stop, since contact with our disorderly forces will spread disorder amongst them, and thus lose us everything."

"So you think that Wilna ought to be evacuated?"

"Unquestionably, Sire, and as soon as possible."

"You are laughing at me! The Russians are not in a fit state to proceed there now, and you know as well as I do that our stragglers don't give a damn for the Cossacks."

The Emperor was convinced that more resources could be got together in eight days at Wilna to resist the Russians than they would be able to collect in a month. In his mind's eye he saw Poland arming all her peasants to drive away the Cossacks, the French Army tripling in size because it had food and clothing, and because its reinforcements were now within reach, whereas the Russians were leaving theirs farther and

1836; at this time, First Embassy Secretary attached to the Duke of Vicenza. Reyneval was later Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (1821), French Ambassador in Prussia, Switzerland and at Vienna under the Restoration, in Spain under Louis-Philippe, who raised him to the peerage.

¹ Macdonald was still in front of Riga.

farther behind. The Emperor, as at Moscow, refused to take into account the fact that the climate favoured the Russians more than us. Already he saw our cantonments, even our advance-posts, protected by the Poles, who were acclimatized and ready, with infantry as well as cavalry, to defend their country and their homes. He even saw our infantry, when once it had eaten its fill, less than fifteen days hence, braving the cold and chasing away the Cossacks. The Emperor seemed to have no doubts about it all, and if I failed to alter his opinion by frankly expressing an opposite one, at least my doing so did not irritate him, since he discussed the situation for a long while with me.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was greatly upset at having to remain behind, although the Emperor, in accordance with his wishes, had made the King of Naples commander-in-chief. The thought that he would be able to be of real service to the Emperor by remaining with the army, and that the presence of someone accustomed to being obeyed was necessary for the maintenance of good relations, consoled him, for his devotion and attachment to the Emperor was heartfelt. He, too, saw how many difficulties there would be in rallying the army, not because of any lack of fresh troops (he had enough at his disposition, and the Guard still formed a satisfactory basis for reorganization), but because the Emperor's departure, which otherwise he believed to be necessary, would provide a pretext for disorder, which might well complete the process of disorganization. At bottom, however, he was far from foreseeing what actually happened, although the troops from the Dwina and Belluno's men were in course of disintegration every day.

The King of Naples, the Viceroy, the Marshals, the Dukes of Elchingen, Treviso, Istria and Danzig, the Prince of Eckmühl, all of them with the exception of the Duke of Belluno, who was in command of the rear-guard, arrived in turn. They constituted a sort of council to which the Emperor announced his determination to go to Paris. His manner was that of someone submitting a project for their opinion on it; and they were unanimous in urging him to go. All the

reasons prepared in advance in our conversations, and all the motives which led him to make this important decision, were examined again. The Emperor gave everyone the orders intended for him. General Lauriston was to go to Warsaw to organize the defence of that region, and to assemble all available troops there, General Rapp to Danzig, etc.

CHAPTER VII

BY SLEDGE WITH THE EMPEROR

1. *From Smorgoni to Warsaw*

AT exactly ten o'clock in the evening we got into the carriage.¹ The Emperor and I were in his travelling carriage; the gallant Wonsowicz was on horseback, riding beside the carriage, and Roustam, with the outriders Fagalde and Amodru,² were also on horseback. One of them went ahead to order post-horses at Oschmiana. The Duke of Friuli and the Count Lobau followed in one carriage,³ Baron Fain and M. Constant in a second.⁴ The necessary preparations had been so carefully made, the secret so well kept, that no one had the least suspicion of what was happening; ⁵ with the exception of the

¹ On December 5, 1812. The Baron de Bourgoing, who was present at this departure, says that it took place at eight o'clock (*Souvenirs militaires du baron de Bourgoing*, by Baron Pierre de Bourgoing, p. 176). Fain says nine o'clock (*Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 2). Ali says it was around eight or nine (*Souvenirs du mameluck Ali*, Louis-Etienne Saint-Denis, ed. by G. Michaut, p. 51). Ségur and Castellane, however, confirm the time given by Caulaincourt, which is also the hour named in the original orders.

² Amodru was appointed second outrider in 1813 and followed Napoleon to Elba. He was his outrider at Waterloo and after the battle he brought the saddle-horses back to Avesnes. He did not rejoin the Emperor till Laon. He set out with him on the journey from Malmaison to Rochefort; but when the Emperor ordered him to hide the belt and hunting-knife he wore, which were part of the uniform of the Imperial Household, and which might have betrayed his incognito, Amodru took offence and left the party.

³ They left Smorgoni several hours after the Emperor.

⁴ The order of the fifth, which appointed to this third vehicle, beside Fain and Constant, one footman and one workman, must have been modified later; for when it reached Paris it contained Fain, Baron Mounier, General Baclet d'Albe, Director of the Topographical Department, and Yvan, the Surgeon-in-Ordinary to the Emperor. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 7.) If one puts any faith in the spurious memoirs of Constant (*Mémoires*, III, 472), one would have to believe that he travelled alone and arrived in Paris five or six days after the Emperor.

⁵ This cannot have been the case if one is to believe the account of Joseph Grabowski (*Mémoires militaires*, p. 86): "The Emperor travelled incognito under the name of Comte Caulaincourt. As he passed through the bivouacs of the

Grand Marshal and Baron Fain, even those who set out on this journey were not notified till half-past seven, when the Marshals heard of it.¹

The Emperor reached Oschmiana about midnight.² Loison's division and a detachment of the Neapolitan cavalry had taken up their position there during the afternoon. The troops were full of confidence, in the belief that they were covered by the main army; consequently the outposts were badly placed, and in addition badly manned. The main body of the division was quartered in the town, where everyone shut himself indoors to escape the cold, which was extreme. Shortly before the Emperor's arrival, a Russian commanding some irregular troops had taken advantage of this confidence to carry out a raid through the town with Cossacks and hussars. The slaughter of a few sentinels and the capture of a few men were the only result of his expedition.³ The firing from every house soon forced the Russians to a hurried retreat, whereupon they took up a position overlooking the town, which they bombarded for some time. This was the state of affairs when the Emperor arrived. M. van Hogendorp, who carried the orders dictated by the Emperor, and even the ordinary courier, had barely preceded us, so that we had to wait for the horses and the Neapolitans.⁴

The Emperor hesitated a moment in favour of waiting till daylight. The carriage following us had not yet arrived. We held a sort of council to decide also whether it would not be better to send a few infantry outposts to keep the road open, in case the Russians tried to occupy it; this precaution,

Old Guard, the grumblers among them called out by way of good-bye: 'Ah, it's Caulaincourt going by—yes, *Colin-qui-court*.'” The anecdote, however, seems to have been a fabricated setting for this rather limping play of words—one which had been already used by the Royalists at the time of the d'Enghien affair.

¹ “Lobau did not even have time to say a word to his nephew; the carriage was already brought round when they notified him that he was to travel in it.” (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 201.)

² “He was sleeping soundly in his carriage.” (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, p. 178.)

³ This attack was carried out by the Russian Colonel Sesslawin at nightfall on December 5th. When the French troops drove them off, the Russians took up a position farther west, only a little way off the road. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 5, and Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, p. 195.)

⁴ See above, the order of December 5th. These men had been delayed by sheet-ice formed after the thaw.

THE FIRST STAGES

however, would have delayed us, and might have informed the enemy of the Emperor's departure, of which he was then still in ignorance.¹ We therefore decided to put a small advance-guard along the road, composed of the mounted Neapolitans. We sent two further advance-guards to follow them in echelon. The rest were divided, half going in front of us and half behind. The Emperor's saddle-horses, which had followed us from Smorgoni, were ordered to come on as far as Miedniki. The cold was increasing, and the horses of the escort could not keep their feet. Of all the detachments, there were not fifteen men still with us when we reached the relay, and hardly eight, including the General and some officers, as we approached Wilna.²

At a league's distance from the town³ and at the break of day we met the Duke of Bassano, who joined the Emperor as I left him; and, as the Emperor did not wish to enter the town, I went ahead in M. de Bassano's carriage to carry the orders to the Government and make further arrangements for our journey. It was well that I went to Wilna myself, as M. van Hogendorp, being only just arrived and having to rouse to action people who were just leaving M. de Bassano's ball, had so far been able to get nothing prepared.⁴ They

¹ Cf. Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, 178. One should bear in mind that for this period the *Souvenirs militaires du Baron de Bourgoing* are especially valuable, because the author had before him an unpublished account prepared by Wonsowicz himself from which to draw his history of the Emperor's journey.

² The General was Lefebvre-Desnouettes, Colonel of the Light Horse of the Guard, who, after selecting the men that were to form the Emperor's escort, accompanied him for some time. The escort, which was changed at Oschmiana, consisted of a hundred Polish lancers under the command of Colonel Stoikowski. After Oschmiana, Lefebvre-Desnouettes rode on the coachman's seat of the Emperor's carriage. (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, 179.) After the posting-house at Rownopol the Poles, of whom there were already no more than 36, were replaced by a detachment of Neapolitan Horse-Guards commanded by the Duke of Rocca-Romana. The Emperor set out again from Oschmiana at two o'clock in the morning of December 6th.

³ "At the little town of Miedniki, seat of the bishopric of Samogitie," says Bourgoing (*Souvenirs*, 188). The Duke of Bassano took Caulaincourt's seat in the Emperor's carriage, in order to have some conversation with him, as far as Wilna. Cf. Ernout, *Maret, duc de Bassano*, 469.

⁴ "The Duke of Vicenza came to me to ask for post-horses, since the Emperor had not come into the town, but had stopped in a house in the outskirts, on the road to Kowno. When I had supplied an escort and fresh horses I thought to join him, but he had been in such haste that he was already gone." (*Mémoires*, p. 325.)

danced while others froze to death. The inhabitants of Wilna had no conception of our situation, of what had already happened, or of what was to come. I mustered a dozen men for the escort. There were no post-horses. I had to take those of M. de Bassano, which took us on the next relay. No one had any suspicion that the Emperor was so near.

The Emperor stopped to change horses in the suburbs of the town.¹ I arrived there at almost the same time, and we set out immediately. In Wilna I had bought fur-lined boots for all the travellers of our party; and they thanked me for them more than once when we met later in Paris, for they would certainly have arrived there with some limb frost-bitten if it had not been for this precaution. The Duke of Friuli and M. de Lobau arrived as we were leaving. The Neapolitans, who were still acting as escort, had their hands or feet frost-bitten. I found the commanding officer² with both his hands pressed against the stove. He expected to relieve the acute pain, and I had great difficulty in making him realize that he was risking the loss of his hands, and in making him go out and rub them with snow—a treatment which so increased his sufferings that he was unable to continue.

M. Wonsowicz, having no more led-horses, and being himself tired, took the footman's seat of the Emperor's carriage. We reached Kowno two hours before dawn.³ The courier had had a fire lit in a kind of tavern, kept by an Italian scullion who had set himself up there since the passage of the army.⁴ The meal seemed superb because it was hot. Good bread, fowl, a table and chairs, a table-cloth—all these were novelties to us. Only the Emperor had been well served throughout the retreat: that is to say he had always had white bread, linen, his Chambertin, good oil, beef or mutton, rice, and

¹ The Emperor, fearing he might be recognized, made a circuit of the town and halted, says Bourgoing (*Souvenirs*, p. 92), "in one of the suburbs, in a country house half destroyed by fire." The suburb in question is Kowno, where the Emperor halted on December 6th, from a quarter-past ten till half-past eleven.

² The Duke of Rocca-Romana.

³ At five in the morning of December 7th.

⁴ "In a hotel run by a Frenchman. They prepared a big fire and a good breakfast for the Emperor." (Roustan, *Mémoires, Revue rétrospective*, VIII, 157.)

beans or lentils, his favourite vegetables. The Grand Marshal and M. de Lobau rejoined us here. I do not remember that I ever suffered so much from cold as on the journey from Wilna to Kowno. The thermometer had passed twenty degrees. Although the Emperor was dressed in thick wool and covered with a good rug, with his legs in fur boots and then in a bag made of a bear's skin, yet he complained of the cold to such an extent that I had to cover him with half my own bear-skin rug. Breath froze on the lips, forming small icicles under the nose, on the eyebrows, and round the eyelids. All the clothwork of the carriage, and particularly the hood, where our breath rose, was frozen hard and white. When we reached Kowno the Emperor was shivering as with the ague.

At Rumsiszki we found a regiment on the line of march. On the way from Wilna to Kowno the Emperor again raised the problem whether he should take, as he had first intended, the direct route through Königsberg.¹ Would it be prudent, with the possibility that some incident would lead to his recognition, to cross the whole breadth of Prussia? We had a commandant in every town, but apart from the regiments on the line of march we had no troops.

On the other hand, there was so much snow that we might be seriously delayed if we followed a less frequented road, on which there were no post-horses. These considerations made us hesitate to take the road through the Duchy of Warsaw, which from other points of view was the safer. If we were not to be delayed, however, it was necessary to make up our minds, so that we could order the horses. After again weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each arrangement we came to a decision. I say we, because the Emperor refused to judge the question and insisted that I alone should decide—which, I confess, seemed to me a heavy responsibility, and worried me considerably. I took a chance, and sent forward along the road to Königsberg, though leaving myself free to change direction at Mariampol if I heard that the roads through the Duchy were passable.

Fagalde was sent in advance as far as Gumbinnen.² It was

¹ Going on to Paris by way of Posen.

² On the road to Königsberg.

not without some difficulty that we climbed the almost perpendicular slope which one must surmount on leaving Kowno for Mariampol.¹ We were forced to get down. As the horses were falling or losing their foothold at every moment, the carriage was several times on the point of running backwards and falling over the precipice. We heaved at the wheels, and at last reached Mariampol. I held a consultation with the master of the posting-house, an honest fellow full of zeal and good feeling. He assured me that the roads were passable, and that if we gave him two hours' start he would undertake to arrange relays of horses for us as far as Warsaw, going by Augustowo. The desire to meet his despatches from France on the way made the Emperor incline a little toward the road by Königsberg; but he left the final choice to me. I did not hesitate. I sent instructions to Fagalde to rejoin us at Posen; and I sent the post-master along the road to Warsaw with instructions to order horses in my name as far forward as Pultusk, where he was to wait for us. As he had seen the Emperor before, he recognized him when we first arrived; he promised me, however, not to mention his name, and he kept to his word. The Emperor spoke to him, which delighted him.

We set out an hour after him, and found peasants' horses everywhere: but as our carriage was on wheels and there was no time to fit runners on it, we were unable to get through the snow, which was piled up everywhere to a considerable height. The sleighs of the couriers, on the other hand, flew over the surface. Chance led me to find a sleigh that was covered in at the first relay station;² and this was a piece of good fortune in view of the Emperor's impatience to reach his destination. The gentleman to whom it belonged having yielded it to me willingly for a few gold pieces, the Emperor and I took our places in it.³ We left the carriage in the charge of the footman, who had gallantly followed it seated on the footman's step. The Emperor hardly gave us time to transfer

¹ The steepness of this climb was to cause a disaster some days later. See General Griois, *Mémoires*, ed. by A. Chuquet, 1909, II, 198.

² The relay station at Gragow. (*Bourgoing, Souvenirs*, 195.)

³ "The postmaster (at Gragow) then said the squire of the neighbourhood had built for his daughter, recently married, a very comfortable berline mounted

our rugs and arms; for lack of space in the sleigh he was even forced to abandon the toilet equipment which was so useful to him.¹ Uncomfortably seated, and still worse supported and closed in, the Emperor sacrificed everything which makes a long journey endurable for the sake of arriving sooner. Henceforward we travelled much more easily and even quickly. The Grand Marshal, who had again caught up with us at Mariampol, had fallen behind again, a quarter of a league out of the town. After that we did not again see either a carriage or a man of those who left Smorgoni with the Emperor.

Since we had been within the Duchy² the Emperor had been very cheerful, and talked all the time about the army and about Paris. He did not question that the army would remain at Wilna, and did not in the least recognize the extent of his losses.

"Wilna is well stocked with food, and will put everything to rights again," he said to me. "There is more material there than they can need to stand up to the enemy. The Russians will be at least as tired as we are, and suffer just as much from the cold; they are certain to go into permanent camp. Nothing will be seen of them but Cossacks. The orders and recommendations I left with M. de Bassano will mend everything. I anticipated everything in those. He is confident of Schwarzenberg's sense of honour, and says he will hold his position and defend the Duchy. M. de Bassano has written to him, as well as to Vienna and Berlin."

The Emperor was anxious only about the effect of our reverses upon those two Courts; but his return to Paris would restore his political ascendancy.

on sleigh-runners. This Polish gentleman at first refused to sell it, no matter what price was offered him; he only yielded to the representations that were made to him when he heard that the carriage was intended for the Emperor. He then asked no other consideration for parting with it than that he should be presented to him. To this the Emperor consented, but he would not accept the gift, for which he paid 1000 ducats (or 10,000 francs)." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs de l'expédition de Russie*, III, 114.)

¹ "The berline was harnessed without delay, and the Emperor took his seat in it, together with the Duke of Vicenza and Comte Wonsowicz. The mameluke was put on the driver's seat. . . . General Lefebvre-Desnouettes was alone able to follow, in a little sleigh which he had promptly obtained." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, 194.)

² The Emperor had entered the Duchy of Warsaw by crossing the Niemen at Kowno.

"Our disasters," he said, "will make a great sensation in France, but my arrival will counterbalance the evil consequences."

He planned to use his passage through Warsaw to put energy into the Poles.

"If they really want to be a nation, they'll rise in a body against their enemies," he added. "And if they do, I shall take up arms to defend them. I should be able to grant later on to Austria those concessions she has so much at heart; then we could proclaim the re-establishment of Poland. Austria has a greater interest in that than I have because she lies nearer to the colossus of Russia. If the Poles don't do as they should, that will simplify things for France and for everyone else; for peace with Russia will then be easy."

He chose to believe, or at least tried to make me think so, that all the Cabinets of Europe, even those most wounded in pride by the power of France, were concerned that the Cossacks should not be allowed to cross the Niemen.

"The Russians should be viewed by everyone as a scourge," he said further. "The war against Russia is a war which is wholly in the interests—if those interests are rightly judged—of the older Europe and of civilization. The Austrian Emperor and M. de Metternich realize this so well that they often said as much to me at Dresden. The Emperor Francis understands perfectly the weak and shifty character of the Tsar Alexander, and mistrusts him, having already been deceived by his protestations and tricked by his promises. The Viennese Government understand perfectly that, apart from her contact with Austria over a long frontier, and all the divergent interests arising from such a situation, the designs of Russia upon Turkey make her doubly dangerous. The reverses that France has just suffered will put an end to all jealousies and quiet all the anxieties that may have sprung from her power or influence. Europe should think of only one enemy. And that enemy is the colossus of Russia."

I answered the Emperor frankly.

"In fact, it is Your Majesty they fear. It is Your Majesty who is the cause of everyone's anxiety and prevents them

from seeing other dangers. The Governments are afraid of a universal monarchy. Your dynasty is already spreading everywhere, and the other dynasties fear to see it established in their own countries. At the moment, what damages the interests of all Germany is the system of taxation adopted three years ago. And the political inquisition set up by certain tactless representatives offends national opinion, wounds everyone's self-respect, and runs counter to all their habits of thought. All these causes and considerations, which are perhaps partly hidden from Your Majesty, make the hatred of you into a national force. And what has stirred up the people even more than the Governments is the military regime imposed upon Germany under the administration of the Prince of Eckmühl."¹

The Emperor was so far from checking my frankness that he listened and replied not only without ill-humour but with real cordiality. From the way in which he received and discussed several of my remarks, one would have thought he had no immediate concern in them. He smiled at the things which touched him nearest, maintaining an air of taking them in good part and of wishing to encourage me in saying all that I thought. At the things which doubtless seemed to him rather strongly expressed he felt for my ear to tweak it; and as he could not find it under my bonnet, my neck or my cheek received the pinch—a kindly rather than an irritable one. He was in such a good mood that he admitted the truth of some of the points I brought forward. Others he refuted. Concerning others he remarked that particular interest might here and there have been disturbed by police measures, or by combinations of circumstances which had nothing to do with the end he had in view. The people, however, were too enlightened, he said, not to see, from the very system on which the countries he had united were administered, that our laws, under which they now lived, offered real guarantees

¹ Since the 1st of January, 1810, Davout had been in command of the army in Germany, which after November 1, 1811, was called the Army of Observation of the Elbe. He was at the same time Governor of Hamburg (from December 1, 1810) and commanding officer of the 31st Military Division (from August 22, 1811).

to every citizen against all arbitrary action. He insisted that our administration was based upon principles that were broadly conceived, noble, adapted to the ideas of the century, and suited to the real needs of the people. He went on to say:

"I could treat them like conquered countries, but I administer them like *départements* of France. They are wrong to complain. It is the checks on trade that irk them. But those depend on considerations of a higher order, to which the interests of France must also yield. Only peace with England can end those inconveniences and their complaints. They need only be patient. Two years of persevering effort will bring about the fall of the English Government. England will be forced to conclude a peace consistent with the commercial rights of all nations. Then they will forget the inconveniences they complain of, while the consequent prosperity, and the state of affairs that will then be established, will for the most part provide means for the prompt repair of all their losses."

The Emperor complained that in these days everyone obstinately refused to look beyond the little circle of his own difficulties. Even the most capable men held to this narrow range of vision. Whereas it needed no more than a little goodwill to realize all the advantages they were on the point of enjoying as a result of a larger view. All the sacrifices were made and it needed only patience to gather in the harvest. It was not given to everybody to judge the new road he had pointed out. The system he had been forced to adopt against England could be judged, together with everything that followed from it, only after the passage of some years. It ran counter to too many habits and damaged too many petty interests not to give rise to a large number of discontented people. And it was of these malcontents that the forces of stupidity and blind hate were now taking advantage. He added that the Continental System was none the less a great conception, and destined to become a voluntary conception, the desire of all the peoples: for it was as much to the interest of individuals as it was to the interest of the Continent as a whole. Prohibition against prohibitionists was common

justice. Moreover, in his desire to establish on the Continent industries that would make it independent of England, he had had no choice of means; he had adopted the sole method which would really hit the prosperity of England. It was a great undertaking; and only he could carry it out. If the present opportunity were allowed to pass, another would not come; for the enterprise had needed just that combination of circumstances which had in fact obtained in Europe during the last few years. He already had proof that he had not been mistaken, and could cite in support of his plea the flourishing condition of industry, not only in the original territory of France but also in Germany—and that although they had not yet ceased from a state of war.

The Emperor inferred from this that the system had built up the industries of France and Germany. It would therefore, he said, be a source of wealth which would replace the foreign trade which we were at present missing. The benefit would be still more perceptible a little later. In less than three years the Rhineland, Germany, the very countries which were most hotly opposed to the prohibitions, would do justice to his foresight and his achievements. To have taught the French and the Germans that they could themselves earn the money which English industries had previously drawn out of the country was a great victory over the London Government. This result alone would immortalize his reign, through the internal prosperity it would bring to France and Germany.

The Emperor concluded from this that what I referred to as the colossus of the power of France was, at that time, a state of affairs wholly advantageous to Europe, since it was the only way to check the excessive pretensions of the English. England, he added, by the very fact that she weighed less than he with the Cabinets of Europe, weighed all the more heavily upon the people of Europe. For she seized for herself alone all the benefits of industrial development. As an island, she doubtless excited less jealousy and anxiety in the minds of Governments that had no coast-lines. Her maritime ascendancy seemed for this reason less burdensome to the Governments of Europe than the ascendancy of France. Her situation pre-

cluded the danger of territorial disputes with them. But her exclusive commercial policy was none the less damaging to individual interests. This fact was not willingly recognized at the present time because the various Governments found it convenient to go to London for subsidies when they wanted them; and it mattered little to them if the cash they received had come from the pockets of their subjects—or rather, had been earned at the expense of these subjects, whose industries would never be able to develop so long as the English monopoly continued.

The Emperor admitted that the annexation of Hamburg and of Lübeck,¹ towns whose independence was useful to commerce, must have alarmed the traders as well as the Governments of Europe, because these changes were thought to indicate a policy which would be continued.

But he justified these measures of expediency by the necessity of confronting England, along that coast, with our own rigid system of prohibition of imports. He added that, as he was in conflict with the actual trade of the towns, he must win over the opinion of all thinking persons. Constitutional government and our code of laws would bring about that change. Being unable to maintain an army of 25,000 men in the new départements, he had taken these measures to ensure us the confidence of the inhabitants. This step, he added further, which was wholly advantageous to the greatest number and in the true interest of the land-owners, already counterbalanced the opposition of the maritime trading interests, which could not be expected to become friendly so long as they could not resume their activities and find outlets for their capital.

The Emperor's opinion was that, far from giving way on some points, he ought to strengthen every measure that might force England to make an earlier peace. He thought it better to suffer severely at the moment than to suffer over a long time. Since the English tried by every measure to evade

¹ The decree of the Senate, dated December 15, 1810, in addition to regularizing the annexation of Holland, had joined with France the Hanseatic towns and a large strip of territory extending as far as Lübeck. These annexations had been divided into ten French départements.

the prohibition of imports, in order to support their industries and uphold their credit, it was for him to do all he could to triumph over their cunning and force his enemy to yield. “It is a battle of giants,” he went on to say. “The seaport merchants are caught between the two champions. How could anyone help being jostled in the fight? But this fight to the death is in the interests even of the men who grumble. They will be the first to gather the fruits. The English have driven me, forced me, to every step I have taken. If they had not broken the Treaty of Amiens, if they had made peace after Austerlitz, or after Tilsit, I would have stayed quietly at home. Fear for the capital of my commerce would have kept me in check. I should have undertaken nothing outside France, for it would not have been to my advantage. I should have grown rusty and easy-going. Nothing could be more delightful. I am no enemy to the pleasures of life. I am no Don Quixote, with a craving for adventures. I am a reasonable being, who does no more than he thinks will profit him. The only difference between me and other rulers is that difficulties bring them to a stop, but I like to overcome them whenever it is made clear to me that the end in view is a great and noble one, worthy of myself and of the people over whom I rule.”

“If the English had let me,” he said to me again, “I would have lived in peace. It is in their own interests alone that they have carried on the fight, and refused offers of peace; for if they had acted in the interests of Europe they would have accepted them. Holding Malta in the Mediterranean, and being in a position to protect other points necessary for the safety of their trade and the victualling of their fleet, what other claim could they advance? What further security could they want? But it is their monopoly they want to keep. They need an enormous volume of trade if their customs-houses are to pay the interest on their public debt. If the English were acting in good faith, they would not have so consistently refused to negotiate. They are afraid they would have to explain themselves, and they dare not admit their designs. If we negotiated, they would have to put their cards

on the table. And then the world would see on which side was the good faith.

"They say—and you are the first to say it, Caulaincourt—that I abuse my power. I admit it, but I do it for the good of the Continent at large. Now England thoroughly abuses her strength, the power that comes from standing isolated among the tempests. And she does so for her own good alone. The good of that Europe which seems to envelop her with goodwill counts for nothing with the merchants of London. They would sacrifice every State in Europe, even the whole world, to further one of their speculations. If their debt were not so large they might be more reasonable. It is the necessity of paying this, of maintaining their credit, that drives them on. Later on, they will certainly have to do something about that debt. Meanwhile, they sacrifice the world to it. The world will realize that in time: men's eyes will be opened, but it will be too late. If I triumph over them, Europe will bless me. If I fall, the mask of the English will fall soon after, and the world will see that they have thought of nothing but themselves: that they have sacrificed the peace of a continent to their momentary interests.

"The Continent," the Emperor said further, "could not—or should not—complain of measures that aimed at closing it, for the moment, against English trade." He told me in confidence that the annexations against which there was such an outcry were temporary measures. They were designed to inconvenience the English, to wreck their trade, to break off their trade relations. They were pledges which he held in exchange for our colonies, or those of the Dutch, or certain claims which the English must give up for the general good.

Since peace could not last, and could not secure a future for everyone, unless it was general, it was wrong, according to the Emperor, to complain of all his efforts to achieve it. Already clear-sighted people and real politicians could appreciate his aims.

The Emperor asked me several times during the journey if I thought that Russia would make peace. He added that while the Tsar Alexander was heartened by some success it

would be wise of him to close the affair. I replied that I still doubted if he would negotiate so long as we were within his territory, and that our successes would not in the least incline him towards peace.

"So you think he is very proud?"

"I think he is obstinate. And he may well be a little proud of having to some extent foreseen what has happened, and having refused to listen to any proposals while we were at Moscow."

The Emperor took up the point. "The burning of the Russian towns, the burning of Moscow, was merely stupid," he said. "Why use fire, if he relied so much on the winter? He has arms and soldiers for fighting. It is madness to spend so much money and make no use of it. One should not begin by harming oneself more than if one were beaten by the enemy. Kutusoff's retreat is utter ineptitude. It is the winter that has been our undoing. We are victims of the climate. The fine weather tricked me. If I had set out a fortnight sooner, my army would be at Witepsk;¹ and I should be laughing at the Russians and your prophet Alexander. He would be regretting that he did not negotiate. All our disasters hinge on that fortnight, and on the failure to carry out my orders for the levies of Polish Cossacks. These prophecies published on the event are nonsense. If they wanted to draw us on into the interior they should have begun by retiring and not have endangered Bagration's army by spreading their forces over a line which, being too near the frontier, had to be too long. They should not have spent so much money building card-castles along the Dwina. They should not have collected so many stores there. They have been planning from one day to the next without settled scheme. They have never been able to fight to any purpose. But for the cowardice and stupidity of Partouneaux, the Russians would not have captured a single wagon from me at the

¹ Napoleon was to return to this line of reasoning at Saint Helena. On September 29, 1817, he said to Gourgaud: "My great mistake was in staying too long in that city [Moscow]. But for that my undertaking would have been successful in the end." (Baron Gourgaud, *Sainte-Hélène, Journal inédit de 1815 à 1818*, ed. by Grouchy and Antoine Guillois, II, 337.)

crossing of the Beresina; and we should have cut off part of their advance-guard, taken 1800 prisoners and, with an army of wretches who had nothing left but their lives, we should have won a battle against the pick of their infantry, which has fought against the Turks.¹ And in fact, when the wreck of our army was surrounded by three of theirs, what did they do? They picked off the wretches who were dying of cold or whom hunger forced to break away from their units!"

On another occasion the Emperor remarked to me that if the Russians had really intended to draw him into the interior they would not have marched to attack him at Witepsk: that they should from the beginning have harassed our flanks more: and that they should have waged only this guerilla warfare, intercepting our despatches, our smaller detachments, the officers who came out to join us, and the raiding parties. He regarded it as a serious fault to have given battle so near to Moscow.

"Everything turned out badly," the Emperor said to me on another occasion, "because I stayed too long at Moscow. If I had left four days after I occupied it, as I thought of doing when I saw the town in flames, the Russians would have been lost. The Tsar would have been only too glad to accept the generous peace which I should then have offered from Witepsk. Even from Wilna, if the cold hadn't robbed me of my army, I should have dictated the terms of peace; and your precious Alexander would have signed them, if only to be rid of the military guardianship of his boyars. It was they who thrust Kutusoff upon him. And what has Kutusoff done? He endangered the army on the Moskowa, and brought about the burning of Moscow. During the retreat, when he had nothing to fight against but lifeless troops, nothing but walking ghosts, what did he attempt? He and Wittgenstein permitted the crushing of the Admiral.²

"All the other Russian Generals were worth more than that old dowager Kutusoff. Tolly³ did at least spare the army:

¹ The battle of the Beresina against Tchitchagoff.

² Admiral Tchitchagoff.

³ Barclay de Tolly, Kutusoff's predecessor in command of the main Russian army.

he did not fight with a capital at his back. Even Wittgenstein, who has just committed so many blunders through not being under the orders of Kutusoff or of the Admiral, was far superior to him. If the King of Naples does not make any foolish mistakes, if he supervises the Generals and stays at first with the vanguard so as to encourage the younger troops, who will be a little scared, things will soon be righted again. The Russians will halt, and the Cossacks will keep their distance, as soon as they see us facing up to them. If the Poles support me and the Russians don't make peace during the winter, you will see what will have happened to them by July. Everything combined to cause my failure. I was not well served in Warsaw. The Abbé de Pradt was afraid; his behaviour was self-important and paltry, instead of being that of an aristocrat. He busied himself with his own affairs, and chattered in drawing-rooms and newspapers. But in public affairs—nothing. He roused no enthusiasm in the Poles. The levies were not made; all the resources on which I should have been able to rely were lacking. Bassano bungled things in Poland as he did in Turkey and in Sweden. I was wrong to be angry with Talleyrand. The boudoir intrigues of the Duchess¹ irritated me against him; and now my affairs have miscarried. He would have given a much more definite direction to Polish effort. As it is, they have immortalized themselves in our ranks, as individuals, but they have done nothing for their country. Everyone lauded this Abbé de Pradt to me. He has intelligence, but he's a muddler."

On another occasion the Emperor said to me, speaking of the Tsar Alexander:

"He is a prince of intelligence, and well-intentioned. He is more capable than all his Ministers. If he were less distrustful of his own powers he would be better than all his Generals. He needs only decisiveness to be very capable indeed; but he is not master in his own house. He is continually hampered by a thousand petty considerations of family,

¹ The Emperor referred here to the Duchess of Bassano, as is proved by a later passage. She had indeed done everything possible to prevent Talleyrand from being appointed to the Embassy at Warsaw.

and even of individuals. Although he takes a close interest in it and gives a good deal of attention to the army, and enters perhaps more than I into questions of detail, yet he is deceived about these things. Distance, custom, the opposition of the nobility to recruiting, and the interest that ill-paid commanders have in drawing pay and rations, all combine to keep the army from being up to strength. They had been working ceaselessly for three years to bring it up to strength, and it resulted only in an actual number of men under arms smaller by half than the estimated strength on the day before the battle. You must admit you thought yourself that the army was much stronger than it was. I always thought you over-estimated them; and you wouldn't believe it. That Cossack at Ghjat was right when he said that the Russian Generals valued their comfort and didn't know how to fight properly. One must do justice to the Cossacks. It is they who have achieved all the Russian successes in this campaign. They are certainly the best light troops in existence. If the Russians had different leaders their army might go far."

At various times the Emperor discussed with me the sacrifices that peace involved, and what the Russians would probably demand on behalf of the Duke of Oldenburg.¹

"They will want to re-establish him in his possessions," he said. "Alexander takes the matter very much to heart because of the Dowager Empress."

As he asked me my opinion on the point, I put it to him that I found it difficult to suppose that the Russians would not try to profit by the occasion, to the extent of obtaining the evacuation of Danzig and the other positions in the North which we had used as starting-points against them. I said that if we were obliged to abandon the Niemen, as I expected we should, their demands would surely go as far as our fortified positions on the Oder. At this the Emperor cried out in protest that he would lose all the advantages he had so far obtained against the English, when his main concern was to force them to make peace; for without that there could

¹ It will be remembered that Napoleon had taken possession of Oldenburg, by a decree of January 22, 1811.

be no lasting tranquillity. I replied that it might be possible to maintain the customs organization in the ports and along the coast without turning them into French citadels.

"And the Russians?" he asked. "What attitude will they take up with regard to England?"

"Your Majesty is in a better position to pronounce on that question than I," I replied. "But certainly you will not persuade them to put themselves in the same position that they were in before. I doubt if even the Tsar could do that."

"Then peace is impossible," the Emperor replied sharply, "if it is not to be general. One must not deceive oneself."

The conversation then turned on the situation in France and on the uneasy state of Europe, which I attributed to the invasions that had taken place. I suggested to the Emperor that a system of more modified power within more restricted limits would bind our allies to us, and even those States which would remain outside the system. I pointed out to him that, from the Duke of Gotha to the Emperor of Austria, all the Governments were frightened by the expansion of our political system, in which they saw a step towards a universal monarchy, for which the war with England seemed to them a pretext.

The Emperor listened to me attentively, joked about my moderation, and repeated to me what he had said on other occasions about his intentions and his motives. He tried to prove to me that he was far from having in view those ends with which he was credited. He was working against the English alone: since their trade had ramifications everywhere he had to pursue them everywhere. He said it was the intrigues of the English, what he called *Punica fides*, which had continually forced him to extend his sphere of operations. He spoke of his need for always maintaining a considerable army as long as the struggle with the English continued, because their Government was always working to stir up Europe against him—and so forth.

I spoke of the impression produced, even in France, by these frequent annexations of provinces and by these changes of allies which disturbed the loyalties of the people. I told the Emperor that instead of looking on these things as advan-

tages, people were disturbed by them, and were made anxious about the future. And I added the following reflections on these points. These amazing extensions of power were, I thought, destroying the feeling of stability and actually preventing that feeling of confidence through which institutions acquire their sanctity. Even those who flattered him felt that while his genius might make these new structures last for his lifetime, they would never last beyond it. People did not dare to tell him so, but they thought so, and this opinion was all the more strongly held for being suppressed. It was felt that he was creating great difficulties for his son. He was arming Europe in advance against the King of Rome, and even against his family: and it was a pity, when founding a new dynasty, to give room for a growing expectation of some change. No one would be able to support the burden of that colossus which the course of events and the vigour of his rule were now setting in motion. These diverse nations would never make Frenchmen; the Rhinelanders already had difficulty in persuading themselves that they had become French.

The Emperor admitted with absolute frankness the justice of my remarks. He did, however, rebut several of them:

"I shall create institutions," he said, "to strengthen the organization I have set up. No one can foretell what sacrifices I might not make—and even gladly—to secure such a state of affairs in Europe as would guarantee a lasting peace to all people, as would guarantee to the French, and to the Germans, domestic prosperity such as the English enjoy. They are a worthy people, the Germans," he added. "They must be repaid for the sacrifices they have made. I do not cling to Hamburg, or to any other particular place. I am not one of those narrow-minded men who see things from only one point of view and are obstinate on a question. There will be many ways of arranging things as soon as the English make up their minds to peace, and agree to concede to others those rights and privileges which Heaven never created for them alone. We can make peace with the English only so long as we have compensations to offer them, because among them the Ministry have a responsibility about which we must

be able to make them easy. They can only take such a decision as making peace with France if they can say to the nation: 'We have made such a sacrifice for such a motive; but here are compensations made to us, and advantages gained.' There is a delicate and difficult relationship between the country and the Ministry, and still more so, therefore, between the Ministry and myself. Without this English peace, however, all others are merely truces. The English are playing for too high stakes to give way lightly. They know very well that I shall take advantage of a peace to establish a navy, and I should not again allow ourselves to be robbed of our commercial capital during a state of peace. They know that a navy in my hands could do them considerable damage. If they were sure I should live only three or four years more they would make peace to-morrow; for the difficulty of the question lies in the navy that I shall have, that I shall build up within a few years."

He added further that he had greater need of peace than anyone, and frankly desired it. How could anyone doubt that? He did not live under canvas for his own pleasure. It was the English who would not decide upon peace and who, according to him, might not be in a position to decide upon it, being afraid of the future. The English Ministry contained clever men who could not have overlooked any of the major considerations of which he spoke. He was well aware that the institutions of France were incomplete. He did not disguise from himself that only peace would put him in a position to give them their full development. And who could doubt that he desired peace, when only peace could consolidate this achievement? With regard to the institutions, he put in the forefront the Senate, which had by no means the independence it must have if it were to command such high respect that it could influence the opinion of the country. He told me that he would raise it to the status of a Chamber of Peers.

The Emperor pointed out that the failure of this campaign was an obstacle to everything. There had to be a buffer state as an outpost against irruptions from the North, and to

exercise a moderating influence on the ambitions of other Powers. Europe owed its misfortunes to the weakness of the Bourbons in allowing a partition of Poland. The Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia fully realized the mistake that had been made. They had, quite openly, entered the war against Russia solely because they were the people most interested in the creation of this barrier. The Austrians expected through these arrangements to obtain a redistribution of territory which would give them necessary outlets for their trade. The King of Prussia flattered himself perhaps that the new state would come under his rule.

The Emperor added further that the silence maintained by the Russians towards the Austrians when the latter attempted mediation, before the opening of the campaign, had left the Emperor Francis in no doubt as to the ambitious intentions of the Tsar Alexander. Francis had told him so several times at Dresden. The Russian Government snatched with both hands, from friends as much as from enemies. Everything seemed desirable to them. After Tilsit they had profited at the expense of their allies the Prussians; after the war against Austria they had accepted a portion of Galicia. No delicate scruples ever hindered the Tsar from rounding off his territory.

The Emperor put forward the reflection that the Tsar, with his gentle methods and air of moderation, had done more for the interests of Russia than the ambitious Catherine whom they idolized: and that Finland was of far greater importance to an Empire whose capital was at Petersburg than the uninhabited Crimea and all Catherine had conquered from the Turks.

The Emperor kept reverting to the idea that the Austrians desired the restoration of Poland, and that they were by no means set on retaining what remained to them of Galicia, adding that at the Peace of Vienna,¹ they would gladly have surrendered their millions of Galicians for a part of Illyria, no matter what, or for a few fragments of territory on the Inn. This arrangement could be made, therefore, whenever he

¹ October 14, 1809.

wished.¹ His father-in-law had urged it upon him at Dresden, and indeed had probably come there in the hope of concluding the matter. He, however, had wished to be sure of the attitude of the Lithuanians, and to see for himself whether the Poles were capable of becoming and remaining an independent country. It resulted from this policy that he had not yet set all the Poles free, and events were proving him right. He would soon be able to see whether they were as worthy of independence nationally as they were as individuals; for adversity steels a gallant spirit more than prosperity. He intended to speak to that effect at Warsaw. He would tell the Poles all our misfortunes, and even all the dangers in which they stood. But he would tell them also all that he hoped for, if they as a nation would second him.

I pointed out to the Emperor that the lack of unity and zeal of which he complained on the part of the Poles was surely due to his leaving them in too great uncertainty about their future: that in practice there was no limit to the sacrifices asked of them: that the unfortunate Duchy, furnishing supplies for everything over a long period, seemed to be exhausted, even the richest having no longer two guineas to rub together. I reminded him that I had always appreciated the advantages of this restoration, as forming a buffer state, and held that this motive was sufficient, as I had had the honour of telling him in other circumstances, to justify the war against Russia. But for several years, like many others, and like some even among the Poles (although they did not dare to explain their views on the point to him as frankly as I had done), in his references to Poland and in the measures he had taken with the declared object of arriving at that goal, I had seen only a method of arriving, through that, at a different goal. In fact, Poland had become a military and political stepping-stone.

Moreover, I pointed out to him smilingly that everything he told me about his conversations at Dresden with the

¹ This was precisely the prize promised to the Austrians in the Treaty of Paris, March 14, 1812, as compensation for Galicia in the event of the restoration of Poland.

Emperor Francis, about his refusal to give up Illyria to the Austrians, and indeed about all that had passed between M. de Bassano and M. de Metternich, showed me that he wanted to hold over Austria his power of giving or refusing, according to circumstances, and that he wished to be always able to make use of the Poles, stimulating them with hopes but not giving any undertakings so definite as to inconvenience his further plans or prevent him from adapting his course of action to future events. I added that when Poland was once restored, the Poles would show scant eagerness to supply us with tools to fight in Spain. In fact it was perfectly plain that if he had been really guided by those broad European considerations that demand a buffer State, he would have at once indemnified the Austrians for the loss of their Polish interests and proclaimed the restoration of Poland.

The Emperor replied with a smile: "You make the same political calculations as the English," and added sharply: "But how was I to make peace with the Russians if they would not cede Lithuania? I could not bind myself to be at war all my life for this object. I certainly did want a restored Poland, but not a Poland whose king would tremble before the Russians and after a couple of years put himself under their protection. Under an elected king, the State could not maintain itself. It would be out of tune with the rest of Europe. Under an hereditary monarch the jealousy of the great houses would again have brought its dismemberment. Do you suppose, for instance, that the Lithuanians would have reconciled themselves to a Poniatowski? The condition of the Court at Petersburg, and the protection of the ruler of a great Empire, would always have suited them far better than the petty court of Mme Tyszkiewicz at Warsaw.¹ Poland must be made into a powerful State by the addition of further provinces. It must have Danzig, and a coast-line, so that the

¹ Constance Poniatowski, niece of King Stanislas, was born on March 2, 1759, and on April 4, 1775, married Count Louis Tyszkiewicz, Grand Marshal of Lithuania. She died in 1830, and was the mother of Anna, who was first the Countess Potocka and then Countess Wonsowicz. Anna lived from 1776 to 1867, and was the author of the *Mémoires de la Comtesse Potocka*, which were edited by Casimir Strylenski.

country may have an outlet for its produce. And it must have a foreign king. A Pole would create too much jealousy. To name this king in advance would have cooled the zeal of the Poles, for they are none too sure themselves what they want. The Czartoriskis, the Poniatowskis, the Potockis, and a host of others, are full of pretensions. Murat would have suited them, but he has so little sense! Jerome, of whom I had thought, has no other quality but vanity: I've had nothing but blunders from him. He left the army because he would not serve under Davout, as though he did not owe his throne to the battle of Auerstädt. His behaviour in the Duchy when he passed through was regrettable.¹ My family have never seconded me well. My brothers are as full of pretensions as though they could say, 'The King, our father. . . .'

Breaking off suddenly, the Emperor asked me:

"Whom would you have made king?"

I replied that as I had never made any kings I could not proclaim my intentions quite so suddenly.

The Emperor laughed and said the choice was very difficult. I replied that I thought, even more definitely than he, that to establish his own dynasty on that throne would create yet another cause of anxiety in Europe; that it seemed to me very difficult even to hope for such a thing in the present state of affairs; that in any circumstances a member of his family on the throne of Poland would have been yet another obstacle to peace with the English, although in itself the creation of this buffer state would have suited their policy.

"In that regard you are quite right," the Emperor said.

The conversation gradually turned to past events, to Prussia and the Peace of Tilsit. I told the Emperor that instead of destroying Prussia it seemed to me he should have reconstructed it—even perhaps under the name of the Kingdom of Poland, if he thought it useful to revive that Power. I said that he had there broken down the very buffer state which it was so useful to have in the centre of Europe; and

¹ On Jerome's journey through Poland at the opening of the campaign, see Frédéric Masson, *Napoléon et sa famille*, VII, 297.

that in his place I should have generously pardoned the Prussians, and reorganized their power on a larger scale and without the intervention of the Russians, in order to bring them within my system of alliances, a thing which must certainly have happened as a result of making Prussia Polish.

"The policy of the Prussians has always been so tortuous," said the Emperor, "and they have always shown such bad faith towards everyone and have been so clumsy, that no Government was genuinely interested in them. I hesitated for a moment whether to declare that the house of Brandenburg should no longer reign; but I had used the Prussians so severely that some consolation had to be left to them. And then Alexander took so much interest in that family that I yielded to his representations. I made a serious mistake, for the power I preserved to the King will not let him forget the power he has lost."

I replied that to change the ruling house, if he mistrusted it, was undoubtedly preferable to depriving Europe of a State whose power would continue indispensable even if he insisted on taking that power out of the hands of the house of Brandenburg. The Emperor answered that it would have been difficult to make the Tsar Alexander take that view, though more on account of the king than on account of the country; and at that time his main and absolutely necessary object had been to close the Continent against the English. It was to achieve this that he had made the concession.

The Emperor then complained of his brothers. I pointed out that it was difficult not to desire a complete independence from the moment that one became a king; and that moreover it was often necessary for their popularity in their own countries that they should resist the Emperor's demands. As my frankness did not seem unpalatable, I said that his intention was indeed to create kingdoms, but that in fact he only allotted them extended prefectures in place of independent states; and that, his kings being mere pro-consuls, their position did not match with their title and the condition of their affairs. The Emperor smiled as though he found my remarks correct.

Probably the conversation did not displease him, as he reverted to it five or six times during the journey, and I needed no urging to repeat the same views. The Emperor nearly always tried to bring me to his own opinion. He brought to the endeavour patience and detailed care, discussing and reasoning as though I were some foreign Power whom it would be to his advantage to persuade. Though his reasoning brought me to share his view on one or two points, in the main I held my own. I noticed that he passed lightly over points which he did not wish to explain. Then if I came back to them he would say:

"You see things as a young man; you don't understand."

He also said at times, when my plea exceeded his patience:

"You don't understand anything about public affairs."

Often he would not agree that things were as I represented them. In answer to the remarks which most directly attacked his ambition and his passion for war he smiled, joked, and tried to get hold of my ear and pinch it, an action which my fur bonnet made difficult. He gave several friendly taps on the neck, and would say jokingly:

"They're wrong! I'm not ambitious. Long nights, fatigue, war—I'm too old for all that. I like my bed and my rest as well as anyone; but I want to finish my work. In this world one must either command or obey. The attitude of all the Governments towards the French showed me that they could count on nothing but their own power: which means, on force. So I've been obliged to make them powerful, and to maintain large armies. I did not go and pick a quarrel with the Austrians when they were alarmed about the fate of England and forced me to leave Boulogne to fight the Battle of Austerlitz. I did not threaten the Prussians when they forced me to go and dethrone them at Jena. But in any case, what is this power they talk about? Nothing! The power of the whole Continent is nothing so long as the flag does not protect trade. The passports of the Duke of Gotha are respected at Paris as they are at Weimar, but the Austrians cannot send out a felucca loaded with Hungarian wine without the permission of the Court of St. James's."

The Emperor also said to me: "I have more foresight than the other rulers. I want to take advantage of this opportunity to wind up the old quarrel between England and the Continent. Similar circumstances will never occur again. What seems to offend no one but me to-day will offend the other rulers before long. Emotion and habits of thought are against me. The Governments are blinded by prejudice and favouritism. After a few years of a bad peace the nations and their rulers would realize what they lacked. I am the only one who can see it now because the others are determined to shut their eyes to it. The power of the English, as it is at present, rests only upon the monopoly they exercise over other nations, and can be maintained only by that. Why should they alone reap the benefits which millions of others could reap as well? The proof that they exploit for themselves what should belong to others lies in the fact that they live only by their customs-houses, by their trading, and that their population cannot consume all that pays tax to them. Why should what others consume pay dues to London? If I were so weak as to give way on certain points in order to make a bad peace, the Continent would blame me for it within four years. It would be too late to change it. All our wealth would be at sea, and the English would take advantage of the truce to fill their coffers and get their breath, and confiscate it all for a mere hint of dissatisfaction—until, that is, the protests of the traders had roused some of these Governments. Then ten years of war, of trouble and misfortune, with three or four coalitions formed and broken up, might not take us even so far as the point we have reached to-day. But posterity sums up without favour and will judge between Rome and Carthage. The verdict will be for the French. They are fighting now, whatever the world may say, only for the general good. It is therefore just that the flags of the Continent should stand in line with ours. The French are fighting for the most sacred rights of nations: the English are only defending their self-assumed privileges."

Returning later to this subject, the Emperor remarked to me that the more he studied the government of England the

more innately vigorous it seemed to him. It had all the advantages possible to an oligarchy. It was strong in wealth and influence; it ruled the country with the support of the public opinion which it created itself through its many dependants. He considered, moreover, that it drew added force even from the opposition—which, according to him, grew weaker every day because it only served to show the strength of its adversaries. According to the Emperor, the ranks of the opposition would be still further thinned; for men starting on a career would for their own advantage take the side of power, which is also the side of fortune. He was of opinion that if the war continued the English, within two years, would fall into a kind of bankruptcy, by reducing the rates of interest. And if peace were made this bankruptcy would fall within ten years, unless the new conditions which would follow on the great changes now about to take place in the New World should offer them an enormous outlet for their trade.

"In English affairs," he said, "everything depends on an imaginary factor. Their credit rests upon confidence, since they have nothing on which to secure it; although I admit the Government has something even better, since all individual fortunes are wrapped up with those of the State. The system of continual borrowing, which continually links the present with the past, does in some degree compel confidence in the future. By involving everyone's fortunes in the fortunes of the State the Government have gained something better than the actual security they lacked; for by that means they have created an unlimited security in the shape of individual self-interest. That," the Emperor added emphatically, "is why we must have patience. The time is not far off when the Ministry will not be able to raise loans so easily, or at least they will not be so large. Then they will not be able to grant their subsidies, which have a great influence on the Continent. For, apart from France, the States of the Continent possess nothing but worthless paper; only at London and Paris is there any money or any credit. At the moment, English affairs are at a crisis. Trade is damaged. Doubtless the Russians, by opening their ports to them, are delaying the

effect of the depression, but since the cause continues the evil hour is only postponed. The English have, it is true, considerable resources yet; but since with them everything depends upon confidence, the least thing may paralyse, endanger, and even destroy their whole system, in spite of the fact that there are among them some very capable men and citizens moved by a true love of their country."

The Emperor returned continually to the subject of England, which occupied his mind above everything else, and during one of our conversations he said to me:

"The people of Europe are blind to their real dangers. They pay heed to nothing but their inconvenience on account of the war at sea. One might think that all the politics and all the interests of this unhappy Continent are bounded by the price of a cask of sugar. It is pitiable: yet that is how things stand. They protest only against the French, and refuse to see anything but the French armies: as though the English also were not present on every side, and present much more threateningly. Are not Heligoland, Gibraltar, Tarifa and Malta, English citadels? Do they not threaten the trade of all the Powers much more than Danzig threatens the trade of Russia? Yet if I gave the people of Europe their head, they would deliver themselves into the hands of the English. Next day they would give Corfu to the English. Yes, and Madeira—just as they have already given them the Cape. Yet from the rocks of Malta the English already control Turkey, and consequently the Black Sea and Russia also. At Gibraltar, they hold the entrance to the Mediterranean. If they could seize Corfu they would have a foothold in Greece, and be masters even of the gulf.¹ The situation leaps to the eye, yet the Austrians will not, any more than the Russians, admit the dangers that threaten them. Jealousy of France is stronger than reason. They refuse to exercise any foresight. But for me, the European Governments would grant the English to-morrow the supremacy they desire. When all trade protection is subject to the whims of the London Government—when we are forced to eat sugar of their selling only,

¹ The Adriatic.

and to wear stockings and clothes of their making—then Petersburg, Vienna and Berlin will grasp the fact of the English monopoly. Until then they will shut their eyes to it, for fear of recognizing that I am defending the interests of all of us alike. The fact is plain to people of goodwill. But where is there any goodwill? The blindness of European politics is pitiable."

The same trend of conversation led us on another occasion to discuss the outlets that the English had secured for their trade; and the outlets they were seeking, and would secure, in the Spanish colonies, and finally the war in the Peninsula.

"Doubtless it would have been better," the Emperor said to me, "to have wound up the war in Spain before embarking on this Russian expedition—though there is much room for discussion on the point. As for the war in Spain itself, it is now a matter only of guerilla contests. On the day the English are driven out of the Peninsula, there will be nothing left of the war but isolated bodies of rebels, and one cannot hope to clear a country of these in a month or two.

"Since the opposition to the new regime comes from the lower classes, only time and the conduct of the upper classes—assisted by a strong and cautious Government which has the support of a national *gendarmerie* and, at the same time, of the presence of some French troops—will calm the storm. Their hatred will wear out when they see that all we bring them is a better law, more liberal, and better suited to the times in which we live than the ancient customs and the Inquisition by which the country used to be governed. At present the Spaniards are fighting because they still believe that we want to make Frenchmen of them. Everything will settle down as soon as we can persuade them that it is to our interests that they should continue to be Spaniards. But for the disasters in Russia the time would be drawing near when the French troops would not need to occupy more than a few fortified points in certain provinces. If the peasants saw no more French troops about the countryside, if they were governed only by their own governors and controlled only by Spanish police, confidence would be established, and this would lead to a spread of peace and conciliation."

According to the Emperor the presence of the English Army was the greatest obstacle to the pacification of Spain, but he would rather see it in that country than be threatened with it at any moment—in Brittany or Italy, or anywhere, in fact, where the coast was accessible. As it was, he knew where to look for the English; while if they were not occupied there he would be forced to prepare for them, and hold himself ready for defence against them, at every point. And that would use up many more troops, give him much more anxiety, and possibly do him much more damage.

“If 30,000 English landed in Belgium,” he said to me, “or in the Pas-de-Calais, and requisitioned supplies from three hundred villages—if they were to go and burn the château of Caulaincourt—they would do us much more harm than by forcing me to maintain an army in Spain. You would make a much worse outcry, my good Master of the Horse! You would complain much more loudly than you do when you say that I aim at universal monarchy! The English are playing into my hands. If the Ministry were in my pay they could not act in a way more favourable to me. You must take good care not to repeat the ideas I express to you; for if the idea entered their heads to make expeditions against my coasts, now at one point and now at another: to re-embark as soon as forces were collected to fight them, and go at once to threaten some other point—the situation would be insupportable.”

“As it is,” he added, “the war in Spain costs me no more than any other war, or any other compulsory defence against the English. So long as peace is not made with that Power, there is not much difference in cost between the present state of affairs in Spain and an ordinary state of war with England. In view of the great length of Spain’s coast-line, with the situation as it is at present we must limit ourselves to keeping the English under observation—unless, indeed, they should march into the interior and a highly favourable opportunity arise for giving battle; for if we forced them to re-embark at one point, since they would always be sure of finding auxiliaries, they would disembark again at another. The Marshals and Generals who have been left to look after themselves in Spain

might have done better, but they will not come to an agreement. There has never been any unity in their operations. They detest each other to such an extent that they would be in despair if one thought he had made a movement that might yield credit to another. Accordingly there is nothing to be done except hold the country and try to pacify it until I can myself put some vigour into the operations there. Soult has ability: but no one will take orders. Every General wants to be independent, so as to play the viceroy in his own province. In Wellington," he added, "my Generals have encountered an opponent superior to some of them. Moreover, they have made the mistakes of a schoolboy. Marmont shows a really high quality of judgment and logic in discussing war, but is not even moderately able in action. In fact, our momentary reverses in that war, which delight the city of London, have little effect on the general course of affairs—and cannot indeed have any real importance, as I can change the face of affairs when I please."

"Events at present," he said, "are giving Wellington a reputation; but in war men may lose in a day what they have spent years in building up. As to the outlet for English trade which the war has created in the Spanish colonies, I admit that is certainly unfortunate as within two years those outlets may counterbalance our prohibition of imports on the Continent."

The Emperor saw, in the separation of these colonies from their metropolis,¹ an important point which would change the politics of the world, which would give new strength to America, and in less than ten years would threaten the power of the English—which would be a compensation. He did not question that Mexico, and all the major Spanish possessions overseas, would declare their independence² and form one or two States under a form of government which would force

¹ Mexico in September 1810, Venezuela, New Granada, Chile, and the Argentine in 1810 or 1811, had all gone into more or less open revolt against the dominion of Spain. Paraguay had declared its independence in 1811.

² The independence of Mexico was proclaimed on February 21, 1821, by the President, Yturbe. Chile had already achieved its freedom on January 1, 1818, Bolivia on August 10, 1819, etc.

them, in their own interests, to become auxiliaries of the United States.

"It marks a new era," he said. "It will lead to the independence of all other colonies."

The changes that would arise from this development he regarded as the most important of the century, since they would alter the balance of commercial interests and, in consequence, alter the policy of the different Governments.

"All the colonies," he said, "will imitate the United States. The colonials grow tired of obeying a Government which seems foreign to them because it subordinates them to its own local interests, interests which it cannot sacrifice to theirs. As soon as they feel strong enough to resist, the colonies want to shake off the yoke of those who created them. One's country is where one lives; a man does not take long to forget that he or his father was born under another sky. Ambition achieves what self-interest has begun. They want to have a standing of their own and then the yoke is soon thrown off."

I spoke to the Emperor of the moral effect which the resistance of the Spanish nation was having on people in general, suggesting to him that he was mistaken in attaching no importance to the example they were setting. I reminded him of the remark of the Tsar Alexander, which had struck me and which I had repeated to him on my return: "You have beaten the Spanish armies but you have not subdued the nation. The nation will raise other armies. The Spaniards, without any government, are setting a noble example to other nations. They are teaching the sovereigns what can be accomplished by perseverance in a just cause."

The Emperor treated as a joke what he called "the utterances of the prophet of the North." He added, however:

"Although he made many mistakes—or, at least, allowed his Generals to make them—the Tsar Alexander is the only one (among the rulers) who has shown good judgment, and made a sound estimate of his position and of the course of events. That prince has more intelligence than men think: and he has good judgment. His misfortune lies in being so poorly seconded."

Returning to affairs in Spain, the Emperor said:

"It is easy to pronounce judgment upon what is past: and easy to exalt as heroism what depends upon causes that are in truth hardly honourable. The heroism with which, in their hatred of France, they now credit the Spaniards arises simply out of the barbarous condition of that half-savage population and out of the superstitions to which the mistakes of our Generals have given new vigour. It is out of laziness, not out of heroism, that the Spanish peasants prefer the dangerous life of a smuggler or of a highwayman to the labours of cultivating the soil. The Spanish peasants have seized the opportunity of taking up this nomadic, smuggler's existence which is so suited to their taste and so much to the advantage of their poverty-stricken condition. There is nothing patriotic about that."

The Emperor cited, in support of his dictum, that armies of 50,000 Spaniards gave ground and took to flight before much smaller forces, because the Spaniards would only go into danger where there was hope of booty.

"The Romans and the Spartans," he added, "had other aims. They faced death for other motives. The land of their fathers meant something to them; but the wretched Spaniards are only moved by the attractions of booty. Anything is better than the miserable existence he leads in his own village. It is nothing but bias that has pompously ascribed nobility to a course of action whose objects have never been honourable, although the result may be useful at the moment to the cause they think the Spaniards are defending. The Spaniard of to-day is still the same as in the time of the Romans: like a savage, he hates the foreigner—or, rather, whatever is unfamiliar to him. He hates anything that tends to bring him out of his condition of barbarism. The Spanish peasantry have even less share in the civilization of Europe than the Russians.

"It is true," he went on, "that the proximity of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain to my own dynasty, which sits on the throne of Louis XVI, seemed to me a state of affairs which was likely to prove inconvenient. I often discussed it with Talleyrand, as I did so many other questions which are in-

volved in the broader interests of the world. For a long time, however, I did not think it very important for the affairs of the moment because it seemed to me so clear that the obstinate stupidity of the King, controlled as he was by Godoy, the Prince of the Peace, would keep the country from any development that might cause me anxiety. Accordingly I had no other intention than to make Spain useful to me against the English. The weakness of the King—combined with the interests of his favourite, who would wish, I thought, not to be in bad odour with the French—suited my policy too well for me to have any thought of other arrangements; when suddenly, roused no doubt by the mutterings of Castilian pride which had been wounded by some proposal, or by some clumsiness on the part of our diplomatic representatives, the King thought the moment favourable to regain the respect of the Spaniards by calling them out against me to whom he was thought to have sold himself. The fool! At the moment when his favour was disappearing in a general outcry against him, he thought to save himself by rousing the nation in the very direction of its discontent; and in trying to save himself he lost Spain. And Murat, in his turn, lost Spain for me by trying to save the favourite. For in the rebellion of Madrid the nation was angry only against Godoy;¹ they only looked upon us as enemies because Murat tried to save him and by this tactlessness gave the nation ground for believing what ill-will whispered against us: that we were partners with Godoy, or he with us."

The Emperor discussed Godoy's insolent proclamation to the Spaniards—the proclamation of October 3, 1806.²

¹ A preliminary rebellion broke out at Aranjuez on the night of March 17-18, 1808. On the 19th Godoy was overthrown and Charles IV abdicated in favour of his son Ferdinand. Then, on the 21st, he went back on his abdication. Murat, having entered Madrid on the 23rd, delayed his recognition of Ferdinand. On May 2, 1808, a general insurrection broke out at Madrid following on the news that the last members of the Royal Family had left for Bayonne. It was vigorously suppressed by Murat. "The 2nd May destroyed beyond repair the strength of Ferdinand's party." (La Forest to Champagne, from Madrid, May 11, 1808, *Correspondance du Comte de la Forest*, I, 7.)

² In this proclamation Godoy, the Prince of the Peace, summoned the Spaniards to arms without, however, telling them what enemy threatened them. Cf. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *l'Espagne et Napoléon*, Paris, 1908, I, 67.

"The behaviour of the favourite," he said to me, "seemed a little suspicious even before Jena. It would have seemed thoroughly suspicious if my ambassador had been a capable man and had kept me informed of what was happening in Spain; but I was not well served.¹ At that time I was amazed to receive an unaccustomed resistance from that Government; and I was on my guard. This change of policy even made me wish to arrange the differences which had arisen with Prussia, although otherwise I should have made haste to pick up the gauntlet which the Prussian Court threw down at such an ill-judged moment. I could see there was some discontent among the Spaniards but I thought only their vanity was wounded, which I could have soothed at a later date; and I confess I was a long way from thinking that I should receive a declaration of war from the favourite. I thought him better advised."

The Emperor added that he had been amazed at receiving, after Jena, this strange proclamation, by which he was not misled for a moment. He added: "Not being able to disguise from myself the intentions of this new enemy, I disguised from him my attitude, although the successes I had just gained stood me in as good stead as I could have wished, and although, being more subtle in politics than Godoy, I had myself provided him, for the moment, with the means to explain everything to me so as to think me satisfied, promising myself to take a startling revenge upon him at the first opportunity, or, at the least, to put the Spanish Court in such a position that it could not prove an embarrassment to me on any future occasion."²

"This behaviour opened my eyes," the Emperor remarked to me more than once; and he added, "the Prince of the Peace might have caused me some grey hairs on the day before Jena,

¹ The French Ambassador in Spain at the time of these incidents was François, Marquis de la Ferté-Beauharnais (1756-1846), the brother-in-law of Josephine, who had replaced General de Beurnonville. His own successor was the Comte de la Forest. Between the departure of de Beurnonville, May 27, 1806, and the arrival of Beauharnais, December 23, 1806, the Embassy at Madrid had been managed by Denis-Simon Carvillon de Vandeul (1775-1850), the grandson of Diderot of whose casualness Napoleon complained again and again.

² Cf. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *L'Espagne et Napoléon*, I, 67.

but on the day after, I was master of the circumstances. For a moment I thought the Spaniards were more decided than they seemed and that my ambassador was their dupe; but that anxiety didn't last. Godoy was more fatal to Spain by the one occasion when he showed some energy than by all the dishonourable flaccidity to which for years he had reduced his master in the public eye. He did not stop to realize that when a man in his position draws his sword against a sovereign ruler, he must conquer or die; for though kings may forgive each other their injuries, they have not and should not have the same indulgence towards subjects. He should have seen that there could be no possible pardon for a man, who, like him, had no roots in the land; neither reason nor policy would allow of it. He made a sacrifice of Spain in order to continue the favourite; and the Spanish sacrificed themselves in order to be revenged on him and on those whom they wrongly believed were his supporters. In a state of revolution rumour and popular hatred can strike roots. Once the first gun is fired, there are no more explanations; passions rise and men who cannot agree kill each other."

The Emperor repeated that the attitude of the Spaniards had almost decided him to make peace at Berlin, and even to give generous terms to the Prussians. He added that if the officer who brought word of the surrender of Magdeburg had arrived an hour later, peace would have been signed.¹

Returning to the subject of Spain, the Emperor told me that when Godoy saw that the Emperor had overcome the Prussians he did all that he could to take him in about his famous proclamation. He pretended, the Emperor added jokingly, that it was directed against the King of Morocco or the Grand Turk.

"We took each other in all the more easily," he went on, "because it was equally useful to each of us to be deceived by the other. Finding me disposed to rival his master in making him a fine fortune, he seconded all my plans. I had

¹ The allusion is to the negotiations that Zastrow and Luchezini opened with Duroc at Berlin in November 1806. Cf. Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, VII, 109. Magdeburg surrendered to Ney under the threat of bombardment, on November 8, 1806.

no thought of overthrowing Charles IV. I was anxious only to make certain, for as long as the war with the English lasted, of the security I needed in order to carry out measures that would force them to make peace. Isquierdo was Godoy's spy at Paris, and the channel for a direct correspondence between Charles IV and myself. As the favourite's confidant, he was very intimate with Talleyrand and Murat. The negotiations were for the most part carried on without the knowledge of the Spanish Government or the Spanish Ambassador.¹ On our side, Champagny took no open part in them.² He was useful to me, however; he is a sound man, zealous, and devoted to me. The King was very pleased to enrich himself out of the spoils of Portugal; and his favourite was delighted to protect himself from Ferdinand's resentment, when the King should die, by creating an independent State for himself.³ Despised by the nation, envied by the great nobles, having no support but the favour of the King and Queen, which he might lose at any moment, he agreed to everything I wanted.

"Murat and Talleyrand were the confidants of his hopes and fears—above all, the latter. His ambition persuaded him, because at the moment it was to my advantage to further his interests, that I had forgotten his past conduct. In his blindness he forgot that he had issued his proclamation only because he thought I was beaten. Once you've behaved like a knave, you must never behave like a fool. Frias,⁴ whom the Prince of the Peace sent to Paris at the time to justify his actions and to bring me, together with the congratulations of the King upon my successes,⁵ his excuses and regrets for what had

¹ The Spanish Ambassador at Paris had been, since 1805, Charles Fieschi, Prince of Masserano. He was afterwards Grand Master of the Ceremonies to King Joseph. After 1814 he went to live at Paris and died there in 1837.

² Champagny was at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs.

³ By the Treaty of Fontainebleau, October 27, 1807, Portugal had been divided between the Queen of Etruria, for whom was created the kingdom of Lusitania, and the Prince of the Peace. Napoleon had reserved the centre of Portugal to himself, to be disposed of when peace should be declared.

⁴ Don Diego Fernandez de Velasco Lopez Pacheco y Giron, Marquis of Belmonte, thirteenth Duke of Frias, Chamberlain to Charles IV, and a Lieutenant-General. He was major-domo to Joseph and later (in 1808) Ambassador to Paris, where he died in February, 1811.

⁵ Frias had been sent to Paris to bear congratulations to the Emperor after the Peace of Tilsit. Cf. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *l'Espagne et Napoléon*, I, 92.

occurred, was only there for form's sake: Isquierdo alone held the secrets of the affair. They did not realize at Madrid that the double purpose of Frias's mission robbed his congratulations of all worth by dressing them in the livery of Confusion and Fear. I showed nothing (of my feeling), however, because I was concerned before anything else with getting adopted in Spain and Portugal the measures agreed upon at Tilsit for the extension of the Continental System. Being in an awkward position with regard to me, the Madrid Government thought they could put everything right by being eager in adopting the system. It was more difficult to impose it on the Portuguese, a nation completely under English influence. If they refused they would have to be forced, and for that it was necessary to act in unison with the Spaniards.

"In this state of affairs it was necessary for the safety of the troops I should send into Portugal (and so necessary for the Continental System) that I should occupy one or two points in Spain. For I could not rely on Godoy. I knew that, long before, he had sold himself to the English and had already considerable investments in that country. Murat had without doubt obtained the upper hand over the enemies of France, but he had not destroyed them.

"The favourite had such influence over the King that, since I could not hope to disabuse the credulous old man, I had to negotiate with Godoy to achieve the exclusion of the English from the whole of the European coast-line. As the Court of Lisbon would not submit to the plan, the Observation Corps of the Gironde, which had been formed, ostensibly, for the purpose of protecting our coasts and preventing smuggling, was mobilized.¹ The despatch of Junot into Spain demanded, in the interests of the Spanish themselves, some definite agreements. Duroc signed the treaty that Talleyrand had negotiated with Isquierdo. It gave to Spain, to the King of Etruria and the Prince of the Peace one-half of Portugal, and kept the other half in reserve as a means of making peace

¹ In October 1807, Napoleon concentrated at Bayonne the troops composing the 1st Observation Corps of the Gironde (under Junot) and the 2nd Corps (under Dupont). On October 12th, the former received the order to advance into Spain, which he did on the 17th.

with the English, which was always the main end I had in view. The Spanish troops were to act with us in Portugal and to guard the coasts,¹ while La Romana² and O'Farril³ were to operate with other Spanish in the north and in Tuscany, in order to demonstrate, in the eyes of Europe, our perfect agreement. The Austrians were well disposed towards us.⁴ The English could therefore deceive themselves no longer. They were at last to see their trade refused in all quarters and the whole of Europe working as their enemies. This time everything worked together for the success of my plans and my main object seemed to be attained. The secret of these negotiations was so well kept, and the military preparations so well carried out, that even at Madrid they suspected nothing. The ambitious Prince of the Peace, concerned only with securing his principality in Portugal, made Charles IV agree to everything.

"The Spanish certainly stood to gain by the arrangement. The elderly King was delighted at conquering Portugal and becoming an Emperor: he thought that this title would make a great man of him, as if the new title would be sweeter to his subjects than the old, and to call himself Imperator would give him the genius and the energy to restore and defend his great possessions.⁵ Each of us, in fact, thought he had done something useful because it was something that would satisfy Spanish pomposity: but we were wrong. During the negotiations at Fontainebleau, Ferdinand, who was in a hurry to occupy the throne, was plotting against his father. Looking

¹ The Treaty of Fontainebleau had put at Napoleon's disposal three Spanish divisions, which were to invade the province of Oporto, march upon Lisbon, and occupy the Algarves.

² Pedro Caro y Sureda, third Marquess of La Romana (1761-1811), was in command of the Spanish troops which were despatched to join the main army in 1808 in fulfilment of the Treaty of Fontainebleau. They were quartered at Hamburg, and in Jutland.

³ Don Gonzalo O'Farril (1753-1831), born in Cuba, was first Ambassador to Berlin, and then commanded the Spanish troops in Etruria. He was afterwards Minister for War to Joseph.

⁴ The Austrians had just signed the Convention of Fontainebleau, on October 10, 1807.

⁵ By the Treaty of Fontainebleau, Charles IV received the title of Emperor of the Americas and King of All the Spains, with the style of "His Imperial and Royal Majesty."

for some support, he thought to secure it by writing and asking me to give him in marriage some relative of Josephine.¹ To explain his request, made without his father's knowledge, he put forward the excuse that his father wanted to make him brother-in-law to the favourite.² The obscurity of this move, and of everything else that was going on, annoyed me. I didn't answer, and I went so far as to abuse my ambassador, whom I suspected for a moment of having had a hand in this suggestion.

"So far was I from expecting any change in the Spanish situation that I did everything possible to make the Court of Lisbon see reason. Talleyrand, who thought these measures would lead to peace with England, even sent Lima there,³ but being sold to England, the Court vacillated for several days and finally would hear nothing of it. It was necessary, therefore, to sign the Treaty of Fontainebleau for the express purpose of clearing up all subjects of disagreement with the Spaniards before occupying Portugal. It was very important to me at that time to remain on good terms with them. My whole political plan depended upon that agreement. Talleyrand, who was much to the fore in my affairs and was conducting the negotiations with Isquierdo, could have told you how important it was. I was far from expecting the scandalous events that were about to disgrace the country and change for us the whole aspect of affairs. I went into Italy,⁴ and sent you to Petersburg, although the son's attempts against his father, their quarrels, and the palace intrigues, had already detached many people from our interests. Things were finally brought to a climax by Ferdinand's ambition. All ties were broken and all the conventional feelings wounded.

¹ His letter of October 11, 1807. Although in his letter Ferdinand states that he waits upon "The Emperor's sole choice in respect of a bride," he had thought of Stéphanie Tascher de la Pagerie, afterwards Duchess of Arenberg. Napoleon thought for a moment of marrying this prince to the eldest daughter of Lucien's first marriage, the Princess Charlotte, afterwards Princess Gabonelli, but Lucien refused his consent to the scheme (cf. Frédéric Masson, *Napoleon et sa famille*, IV, 207) and the girl's own madcap and giddy behaviour turned Napoleon's thoughts finally away from her.

² Godoy had in fact thought of marrying the Prince of the Asturias, who was a widower, to his sister-in-law, Maria Teresa de Bourbon, and niece of Charles IV.

³ M. de Lima, Portuguese Ambassador at Paris.

⁴ The Emperor set out for Italy on November 16, 1807.

"In this situation, I had to make up my mind to some policy. In the person of the father and his favourite, Spain had been on my side; now, by the new course of events and in consequence of the intrigue which was deposing Charles IV in favour of his son, Spain would be against me unless I were to become the accomplice of Ferdinand. This role was against my principles, and would have been unworthy of me. I could not, however, deceive myself as to the consequences of this revolution. It was soon clear to me that the Court, split up by unpleasant intrigues, would sacrifice the true interests of the country and its relations with us if, considering only my immediate advantage, I were to take my stand on the side of Charles IV. A mean or underhand policy has always revolted me. I should perhaps have been well-advised to support Ferdinand, who seemed to be at that moment the leader of the Spanish people; but to do that would have been to betray the King, for it was notorious that ambition towards the throne was what directed the son and Infantado.¹

"Hatred of the favourite was a useful pretext for their ambition. The interests of Spain had no place in the affair, which was an intrigue of the seraglio and nothing more. To take my share in it would have made me the partner of the son in his infamous conduct and treachery toward his father. I have picked the Crown of France from the gutter in which it had been dropped; and having raised it to the heights of glory, I could not aid in degrading the sceptre of Spain and the sacred authority of a king and a father.

"The position was such that if I were to declare myself in favour of the legitimate authority of the father against the usurping son, that would be a declaration contrary to the will of the nation and would bring down upon the French the hatred of the Spaniards. Moreover, that policy, which would be against my own interests, could have no other effect than to maintain and continue the disorder and disrespect in which the present reign was involved. I could not make myself the

¹ Don Pedro de Toledo, 30th Duke of the Infantado (1771-1841), was the intimate friend of Ferdinand, who appointed him Colonel of his Guards.

support of Godoy against that proud people. I was determined that if I had to meddle in the affairs of that nation it should be in order to save and restore it; so I decided to wait. I merely watched. Although, in the last resort, I owed nothing to a Court which had threatened me in the moment when it thought I was in difficulties, I nevertheless enlightened Charles IV as to his position; but the intrigues of the Prince of the Asturias and the favourite were a stumbling-block in the way of every action. I was soon convinced both King and nation would fall victims in this situation. Ferdinand, who had asked me to marry him, implored me to protect him; the King asked me to defend him. As to the favourite, he would agree to anything that saved his face and preserved his influence. Cowardly as a counsellor and base as a citizen, he thought of nothing but himself. I would not soil myself by taking part in these intrigues, but delayed the ratification of the Treaty Duroc had made at Fontainebleau until affairs had come to some better order.¹

"Meanwhile, Junot's army had occupied Portugal, which the Court abandoned, going instead to Brazil.² This obliged me to make new schemes. I thought it best to leave them to wash their dirty linen by themselves: and to abandon Portugal to them but exclude them from this side of the Ebro. That would make the Government answerable to me for the maintenance of the measures taken against the English and would give us the Basque provinces. Fundamentally the Spanish would gain by the exchange, which could not fail to suit them. A good offensive and defensive treaty and the position which that gave us with each other would have made true allies of them; but stupidity, fear, and the differences between the father and son made everything miscarry. Perhaps also I allowed Isquierdo, who went to Madrid to negotiate an agreement, to see too clearly my reluctance to meddle in their quarrels and my contempt for Godoy and all their

¹ On January 10, 1808, the Emperor indefinitely postponed the publication of the Treaty of Fontainebleau. The Spanish had ratified it on November 8, 1807. Cf. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *l'Espagne et Napoléon*, I, 109 and 128.

² On November 27, 1807.

intrigues.¹ Suspecting my unwillingness to support him, the aged King took fright, and was on the point of going to America.² None of them, however, had the courage for a forceful resolve. They preferred to sit down and make plots against each other and put their subjects' hands to the dagger. I had done nothing to bring these things about—which were not to my advantage. I sent into Spain more troops than I had estimated, in order that, whatever the outcome, events should not turn definitely against us—which the terror of the favourite and the intrigues of the English, who already had a hand in Ferdinand's schemes, might have brought about. Murat, who commanded the army, achieved nothing but stupidities, and led me into a mistaken line of action.

"The Spanish affair," the Emperor repeated, "arose solely out of a chain of circumstances which no one could have foreseen." It had been a great annoyance to him, and had forced him into actions never planned by him. No human calculation could have been equal to the exceeding stupidity and weakness he had met with in Charles IV, or to the culpable ambition and double-dealing of Ferdinand, who was as mischievous as he was contemptible.

He added that Ferdinand had come to Bayonne on the advice of Escoiquitz,³ who thought by that course to secure a wife and a kingdom for him. And the old King also came there, of his own choice. The Emperor repeated to me several times that on that occasion he had spoken frankly to the Spaniards who had come to Bayonne: he had not disguised from them his opinion of Ferdinand, even before his arrival. It had therefore depended on those who came before him to warn him: and for him to turn back whence he had come.⁴

The Emperor added that even after the arrival of Ferdinand

¹ Isquierdo went to Madrid in December 1807, and set out for Paris again on March 11, 1808.

² In March, 1808.

³ Don Juan de Escoiquitz (1762-1820), Archdeacon of Toledo, former tutor to the Prince of the Asturias, who had complete confidence in him.

⁴ Charles IV and Marie-Louise disembarked at Bordeaux on April 30, 1808. Ferdinand had been there since the 19th. Napoleon had entered the town on the 14th, and on the 17th established himself in the château of Marrac.

he had remained for a long time undecided. He then remarked that, since the affair had turned out badly, everyone would now expound its course in his own fashion, in order to justify himself: and that he was blamed for this undertaking, as he was for everything that did not succeed, in spite of the fact that he had been guided in this considerable enterprise only by what seemed to him, after mature reflection, to be in the best interests of the Spanish nation as well as of the French. He repeated again that no one could conceive the blindness of the counsellors who had the confidence of those princes: or the infatuation of the Viceroy¹ for the Prince of the Peace, for whom he retained his solicitude. No one could imagine, added the Emperor, the hatred of the mother for her son or of the son for his father and mother. The Queen had told him once that they thought Ferdinand capable of everything, even of poisoning. The King and she feared more than anything that they might fall into his hands. It was that thought which made them leave Spain, whither they feared to see him return, and which always turned them aside from any plan for their return.

These princes, the Emperor also told me, used to vie with each other in telling him the story of their wrongs and complaints against each other. This habit reached such a point that it often made him blush for them, and he would try to break into the conversation so as not to soil his ears with so much that was disgusting. Each of them played for his own hand. Not one of them had ever had a thought for the interests of Spain.

The Emperor spoke of Escořquitz, whose sole idea had been to get Ferdinand married at Bayonne.

"He's a petty intriguer," the Emperor said. "Nevertheless I should have done just as well for myself if I had joined hands with him in the scheme, since Ferdinand was at that time the idol of the Spaniards. In such a case it would certainly have been said that I incited him and that I was a

¹ This must refer to Murat, though he never bore this title. Murat was the Emperor's lieutenant in Spain from February 20, 1808, was appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom of Spain to the King, Charles IV, on May 2, 1808, and on May 4 President of the Supreme Junta of the Government.

partner in his conspiracy. Anything seemed to me better than that. There were three courses I might have followed in this affair. I chose the one which was indicated to me by my concern for the well-being of Spain and our own interests. Of the others, the second would have made me accessory to a crime, and the last accessory in the humiliation of a nation which was trying to throw off the disgrace of the previous reign. I could not hesitate over the choice, and it was these considerations that prevented me from sending these princes back to Spain, as my own interests advised. Ferdinand would soon have exhausted the enthusiasm of the nation and his father's return would have humiliated him to such an extent that he would certainly have turned to me and called me to his aid within six months. But C—— and M——¹ thought it would be best to take advantage of the moment when everything was ripe and the change all the easier to bring about because they had succeeded in bringing discredit upon themselves at Bayonne, even in the eyes of those Spaniards who were most devoted to their cause. Murat told me fairy-tales, which led me into error. I thought to cut short the misfortunes of the country: I was mistaken. If I had followed my own instinct I should have sent those princes home. To-day, Spain would have been at my feet. I was misled—or rather, the course of events defied all human foresight. Could one have foreseen that Murat would commit nothing but stupidities, and Dupont an act of cowardice?² The Spanish will one day regret the constitution I gave them. It would have given the country new life. It was Dupont's greed, his grasping spirit, his desire to preserve at all costs his ill-gotten fortune, which led to the Spanish revolt.

"The capitulation of Baylen ruined everything. In order to save his wagons of booty, Dupont committed his soldiers, his own countrymen, to the disgrace of a surrender which is without parallel: and to the disgrace, so damaging in its effect on the Spanish people, of giving the proof of the acts of

¹ Only these initials appear in the manuscript. It is safe, however, to read them as Champagny and Maret, of whom the first was then Minister of the Interior and the second a Secretary of State.

² The capitulation at Baylen, July 22, 1808.

sacrilege and church-robbery that Dupont had tolerated in order to cover his own depredations. When he stipulated that the soldiers' packs should be examined and his own wagons go untouched he wrote his own infamy on the pages of every history: these are the Caudine Forks of our history. The sight of the stolen objects was the signal for the rising, and those who carried them back made use of them to incite the superstitious people to vengeance."

The Emperor added further: "Marescot¹ is an honest man. He was deceived by Dupont, and he was weak at the moment when he should have been firm. I was severe with him because he was a high officer of the Emperor, and a man in his position should know how to choose a glorious death rather than the disgrace of putting his name to such a surrender—a surrender which the least opposition would have prevented."

Returning to the affairs of Spain in general, the Emperor said that intelligent people, those who knew something of him, would never suspect him of having wished to debase the sovereign authority.

"I look at these things from a higher standpoint," he went on. "I am too conscious of my strength to stoop to such intrigues, so far beneath my character. I proceed more frankly. It would be a more reasonable reproach, perhaps, to say that I shape my policy as torrents shape their bed. You must have heard the details of the revolt while you were at Petersburg from the Russian envoy to Madrid² and from Tchernychev, who came to Bayonne; for the Tsar Alexander, who for a long time refused to recognize King Joseph, did in time come to realize that I had nothing to do with these intrigues."

¹ Armand-Samuel de Marescot was born at Tours on March 1, 1758, and died at St. Quentin (Loir-et-Cher) on November 4, 1832. He was a Divisional General from November 8, 1794, and Grand Eagle of the Legion from the month Frimaire of the year XII. In 1808 he had been commissioned to inspect the fortifications of Spain. In July he happened to be in company with Dupont, and on account of his relations with General Castanos he had been appointed one of the negotiators of the surrender. On his return to France in 1812, Napoleon degraded him from his rank and exiled him to Tours. Cf. Colonel A. Grasset, *La Guerre d'Espagne 1807-1813*, III, 192.

² This embassy was held, from 1805 to 1808, by Count Gregory Alexandrovitch Strogonoff (1770-1857).

The Emperor discussed M. de Talleyrand: "He boasts that the disfavour in which he thinks himself held arises from his supposed opposition to the war in Spain. In truth, he didn't urge me to it at the moment when it began, for I was myself far from seeing the events which afterwards took place and which brought it about, but no one was more convinced than he that the co-operation of Spain and Portugal and even the partial occupation of those States by our troops was the only way of forcing the London Government to make peace. He was so strongly of this opinion that it was with this object he negotiated with Isquierdo the treaty Duroc signed at Fontainebleau. Talleyrand was the moving spirit of those negotiations, although he held no office. This method of forcing the English to make peace—peace with the object of securing the evacuation of those States—seemed to him of immediate necessity.

"He brought great energy to bear on the situation when the departure of the Court of Lisbon for Brazil altered all our plans. It was he who sent Isquierdo to Madrid. If it were not that he had a great interest in the success of that journey, I should have suspected him of contributing to the anxiety that came upon the King when his agent arrived at Madrid.

"Talleyrand, realizing later that he had been mistaken in the hopes of fortune and influence that he had built upon these treaties, and realizing that I was doing without him, thought himself tricked. Being a clever man, he has no longer attempted anything beyond justifying himself in the eyes of the public for the part he is known to have taken in this affair, and he has constituted himself the apostle of discontent. He forgets that he also conceived the idea, previously, of deposing the dynasty in Spain as we had done in Etruria. I am far from reproaching him for that. He has good judgment. He is the most capable Minister I have ever had. Talleyrand was too well informed about public affairs, and too good a politician, to admit that the Bourbons could return to Madrid when there were no longer Bourbons at Paris or Naples. Time might perhaps have brought about this change without violence; the interests of France, and even those of Spain if rightly understood, pointed in that direction. There

was never anything settled on the point—an infinite range of conjecture, as on all the more far-reaching political questions, and that was all.

“Talleyrand saw and pointed out to me all that intelligent people were thinking and that policy demanded. In a case of difficulty, in a war against a section of Europe, could the French take the risk of having a hostile dynasty on their flank? Talleyrand, who is among those who have done most to establish my own dynasty, was too much concerned in its maintenance, too clever, and too far-seeing, not to advise everything which would tend to its preservation and to the preservation of tranquillity in France. He has pronounced against this war only because he was not made a Minister with plenary powers, as he had hoped. Forgetting then that it was French blood which was being spilt in Spain, he began, like a bad citizen, to preach against the affair more loudly as he saw it taking a bad turn. With him, as with many people, one would need to be always successful. I was sensible of his conduct, and I made him feel it, because his ill-will began with the defeat of Dupont. Like a coward, he threw stones at me when he thought I was beaten.

“Everything that has been done against the Bourbons has been done under his Ministry and was proposed by him. It was he who constantly pressed upon me the necessity of keeping them from all political influence. It was he who persuaded me to have the Duke of Enghien arrested, to whom I did not give a thought until the prefect Shée¹ and the English intrigues of Drake² drew the attention of the police upon him. At the time I was far from attaching the least importance to his stay on the banks of the Rhine, and consequently I was far from having any settled intentions with regard to him. It was either Moncey³ or Shée who then told me that he often came

¹ Henri d'Alton, Count de Shée, born at Landrecies on January 25, 1739, Colonel in 1791, Counsellor of State from the 18th Brumaire, Prefect of the Bas-Rhin, at Strasbourg, the 4th Vendémiaire of the year XI, Senator on February 5, 1810, peer of France, June 4, 1814, died in Paris, March 3, 1810.

² Francis Drake, called Musca, English agent at Munich.

³ Moncey had been appointed Inspector-General of Police on December 5, 1802. In this capacity, he made a résumé for the Consul of the police reports from all the départements.

to Strasbourg. I had not known of it. Berthier and Cambacérés were doubtful about having him arrested, on account of the Court of Baden. Talleyrand insisted: and so did Murat and Fouché.¹ Taken in by the revolutionaries, and urged on by them, Murat, alarmed by Fouché and Roederer, saw no safety for himself or for me, as soon as he heard of the Duke's arrival in Paris, except in his execution. To listen to him, one would have thought the Government was threatened, the Governor in danger.² He's a brave man on the battlefield, Murat, but he has no head. He likes only intriguers, and is always taken in by them. All the men who had taken part in the Revolution, the Generals, the men bred in republican ideas, were disturbed by my advance to power. The Royalists, intriguing still and clumsy, spread the rumour, without giving much thought to it, that I was going to play the role of Monk. I was not steady in my seat. To listen to Murat, Fouché, and the rest, one would have thought that public opinion was unsettled: that nothing I could do would calm it; and that in this uncertainty no party supported me, for the weak Royalist party regarded me as only a transitional figure. No party, moreover, could achieve anything. The nation then would be against me: the revolutionaries were afraid of me, but still more afraid of the Bourbons. They scared Murat, and gave him exalted notions.

"For my own part, they made no great impression on me. I protected them because it is the duty of the Government to protect everyone, without distinction. I myself looked at things from a higher standpoint than the rest, and was no more inclined than usual to seek support among the parties; I felt that France needed a government which would embody

¹ In the Council held on March 9, at which were present the three Consuls, the Chief of Justice, Talleyrand, and Fouché, "the two leaders of the opposing parties were M. de Talleyrand and M. de Cambacérés. M. de Talleyrand advised the utmost rigour against the Prince." (Pasquier, *Mémoires*, I, 178.)

² On January 15, 1804, Murat had been appointed to the command of the 1st Military Division, with the title of Governor of Paris. On the part played by Murat in the affair of the Duke of Enghien, see *Lettres et documents pour servir à l'histoire de Joachim Murat*, ed. by Prince Murat, with a foreword by Paul Le Brethon, Paris, Plon, 1909, III, 83; also Boulay de La Meurthe, *Correspondance*, III, XVII.

the results of her sacrifices and the glory she had won, a government whose concern it would be to create confidence and security for all the nation's interests, within and without the country. I felt that I was the man of strength, designed by my nature to preside over these great destinies. I was not so foolish as to work for others when I felt myself the only man equal to the demands of the French nation. I had read history, and, knowing myself capable of dealing with the situation, I was no more inclined to put France at the mercy of the hates bred during the emigration than to raise to power men who would show no gratitude.

"So I made a stand. I prepared everything for the reorganization of a monarchy. It is the only form of government suitable for France, and the only one which can keep the European monarchs quiet. They needed me; experience had proved to me that I was not mistaken there. As for the Duke of Enghien, at the moment of sending Ordener to arrest him, I did not consider him of much importance. I thought they would take Dumouriez as well, which was of more concern to me, as his name lent the air of a major conspiracy to the plot. I was within my rights, because the Prince was conspiring against me, as were Georges Cadoudal and the others. All these intrigues were interconnected.

"They caught him *in flagrante delicto*, while the assassins hired by his family, urged on by him and by the English Minister at Stuttgart, were arrested in France, sword in hand. You ought to know this, Caulaincourt. Were not you instructed to effect a reconciliation between ourselves and Baden over the violation of the territory?" I answered yes, and that some charitably minded people had even attributed the Prince's arrest to me.

"That is notoriously untrue," replied the Emperor. "The Chief of Police even denounced you at the time as having secretly warned the Prince of Ordener's intention to arrest him, and as being the cause of his having tried to shoot him and only just missed killing him. I didn't believe any of it."¹

The Emperor added that, having given orders for the Prince to be brought to Paris, he was rather undecided as to what policy he should adopt; but Murat, urged on by the revolutionaries, had so impressed upon him that all would be lost if he did not make an example, that without giving his positive consent he had sent orders that the Prince should be tried by military commission, reflecting that this was only a legitimate defence on his part. The Prince asked to see him, and even wrote asking for an audience, but he only learned this after sentence had been carried out.² This haste on the part of Murat, the Emperor continued, was the cause of the police having no time to question him, and of thus missing some important intelligence concerning other branches of the conspiracy.

Berthier and Cambacérès would have preferred that he should not be arrested, and above all that he should not have come to Paris, since they felt that directly he was there, the situation would be awkward and even embarrassing for me, faced as I was by the nation whom I must leave in no doubt as to my intentions. Their common sense told them that I should have to show severity, and at the same time they veered towards leniency.

Talleyrand, more politic than they, was quite rightly in favour of the arrest. We were not considering then what effect the execution would have upon the people; we saw only conspirators, who, since they wanted to assassinate the first magistrate of France, deserved the same fate.

“Although there was a good deal of talk in Paris about

¹ See in Boulay de la Meurthe (*Correspondance*, II, 250) the report of Jean Baptiste-Claude Charlot (1766-1827), Commandant of the 38th Squadron of the Police in Alsace. He mentions a threatening gesture on the part of the Duke of Enghien, but does not attribute its cause to Caulaincourt.

² For information about this letter—which never existed—see Boulay de la Meurthe, *Correspondance*, III, 27. In this selection inspired by the Emperor, and known under the name of *Lettres du Cap*, *Documents particuliers en forme de lettres sur Napoléon Bonaparte*, 106, more is said about these documents, attributing the delay to Talleyrand rather than to Murat. However, he had declared to Warden (*Letters written on board H.M.S. Northumberland*, London, 1816): “I solemnly affirm that neither letter nor message from the Duke reached me after his death sentence.”

the whole business, I should do the same thing should a similar case arise.¹

"All the same, it is possible that I might have shown mercy had Murat let me know of the Prince's request. He certainly would not have perished if I had received him, even although the law had condemned him, no motive being strong enough to authorize his conspiracies on our frontier and his hiring sixty ruffians to have me murdered. It is not I who have dethroned the Bourbons; they really have no one but themselves to blame. Instead of chasing them out and ill-treating their friends, I have offered them pensions and paid off their servants. They have answered my kindness by arming assassins. Blood calls for blood. However, I have always rejected the proposals made to me. At a million a head I could have found people who struck with greater precision, but such methods were beneath me. Had I known of a plot against their lives I should have had them warned. I showed mercy to Polignac and Rivière² because they were inevitably conspirators and public morals were sufficiently avenged by the executions of ordinary assassins.

"It is not I, it is not even the leaders of the Revolution, whom the Bourbons should blame for their expulsion; Colblentz was the cause of the King's death. There are documents in the archives which leave no doubt on that score. They unravel plots which can only be associated with the principal *émigrés*. It was undoubtedly a great crime that the King should have been put to death. Apart from that catastrophe, the Bourbons have no right to conspire against my life. If I

¹ It is known that even in his testament (April 15, 1821) Napoleon maintained this statement. "I had the Duke of Enghien arrested and sentenced because it was necessary to the security of the French people, in the interest of whose honour it was done. I should do the same thing should a similar case arise." After these phrases reproduced by Montholon, there is an added note by the latter: "This passage was written in between two lines after he had heard an article read from an English review in which the Dukes of Vicenza and Rovigo were outrageously attacked." (Montholon, *Récits de la captivité*, II, 510.)

² Of Armand and Jules de Polignac and M. de Rivière, arrested on March 4, 1804, for taking part in the Cadoudal plot, the first and third had been condemned to death, and the second to two months' imprisonment. Bonaparte commuted the sentences of death to imprisonment until peace-time, when they could be deported.

were not occupying the throne it would be occupied by another, for the nation did not want them in any case."

The Emperor returned to M. de Talleyrand.

"He is your friend," he told me, adding: "He is a born intriguer, and quite immoral, but he's very witty and certainly the most capable of all the Ministers I have had. We were on very cool terms for a long time, but I am no longer angry with him. He would still be Minister if he had wished to be. I thought before the campaign of sending him to Warsaw, where he would have been very useful to me; but monetary intrigues on his part, and bedroom intrigues on the part of Madame de Bassano prevented this. The duchess, seeing in his entry into politics the probable removal of her husband from the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, to which both husband and wife clung above everything, did all she could to get M. de Talleyrand out of the way. Having started an intrigue with one of her friends, they contrived to make me so annoyed with M. de Talleyrand that I was on the point of having him arrested. I found out the truth too late from the police. It was this intrigue," added the Emperor, "which led to the Abbé de Pradt's nomination, of whom Savary and Duroc were so loud in their praises, as also was Murat, who thought him a prodigy of nature because he had the gift of the gab and wrote articles for the papers. Choosing him lost me my campaign. Bignon¹ is worth a dozen of him, and would have managed his affairs in Warsaw far better. Talleyrand would have done more there through the medium of Mme Tyszkiewicz's salon, than Maret and the Abbé de Pradt with their zeal and gossiping and all their dealings with Poland, which, thanks to them, I could not turn to any account in the Russian affair, which was in reality Poland's affair."

On another occasion, the Emperor in repeating to me what he had already said about M. de Talleyrand added that it was his inveterate longing for grandeur which had lost him the Ministry, that he had wanted to be a great dignitary, a prince,

¹ The Baron Louis-Pierre-Edouard Bignon, born at Guerbaville (Seine Inférieure), July 15, 1771, died in Paris, January 6, 1841. Historian and diplomat, he was at that time the Emperor's Commissary in the Government Commission of Lithuania.

and, above all, supreme Chancellor of State, but that he, Napoleon, had never wished it, partly because the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs could not be occupied by two people, and partly because it would have been distasteful in the extreme to the Duke of Bassano, who was accustomed to his own manner of working and did it perfectly: "He understood me, which is the privilege of very few people," added the Emperor. "As for Talleyrand, he has always regretted the Ministry because it represented to him a means of getting money, of which he and those around him are always in need. I would, however, give it back to him if he would consent to separate from his wife. It isn't fitting that the diplomatic corps should associate with that baggage. I have no desire that my affairs should be put up for auction by her." I observed that M. de Talleyrand was not on sufficiently good terms with his wife to warrant any suspicion of his confiding in her, or the belief that he would be susceptible to the least influence from her, that he would fall into disrepute if he were to leave her now to enter into politics; that such a condition made the whole thing impossible, which was unfortunate since choosing him would appear to all the Cabinets to indicate moderation and even would seem to be a preparatory step towards peace; that something of the sort was necessary at this juncture to satisfy public opinion in Europe and in France. I added, furthermore, that I failed to understand the importance which he laid on Mme de Talleyrand's removal, since she had already done the honours of her husband's house and had even been received at Court several times. The Emperor replied to this with spirit that Talleyrand would have to change some of the company he kept, besides, that he would have to get rid of his — and his —, and told me that I had no idea of what went on in that house; when he was Minister the salon was an auction-room with his supposed friends as the brokers; that he wanted no more scandal of that sort; that Talleyrand had believed that he could not do without him and that he would, in consequence, make him supreme Chancellor of State and leave him to look after everything; that, in such an arrangement the Minister would have

been merely a head clerk; that he had probably forgotten that he did not want two authorities in the State; that it was the Emperor who was governing; that it was the battles which his armies had won which prompted all the treaties, sustaining his supposed worth and his reputation; in short, that French affairs had in no way grown worse since he had taken other Ministers; that he was satisfied with M. de Bassano; that if he lacked M. de Talleyrand's foresight and understanding in politics, he had at least the merit of suiting him; that it was true also that his wife was displeasing to him; that Mme de Bassano was vain and mischief-making: that at heart she loved intrigue and had perhaps too much influence over her husband, to his detriment; but that M. de Bassano was a decent enough man, a ready worker, accustomed to politics, and that he was very much attached to him; that he certainly had made great mistakes; that it would be a lasting reproach to him not to have prevented the Turks from making peace with Russia, and to have allowed Sweden to escape from our system of alliances, which showed great lack of forethought: that for each spy that he had, even at Bucharest, he should have had twenty; that he was not short of money, and with the help of money one could arrange political affairs in Turkey more or less as one wished, especially in dealing with a plenipotentiary who would have understood perfectly that he was taking no risk in pocketing our napoleons not to sign a peace with Russia, whom we were at the same time attacking; that Russia had given two million to the Turkish plenipotentiary, and M. de Bassano should have given four; that he deserved the same reproach relatively with regard to Sweden; that it was such a poor country that a few millions would have settled the affair, and a few millions were of no significance in a question of keeping such important military supports. The Emperor drew the immediate conclusion from this that he would not have had Tchitchagoff on his hands and that he would in consequence have stayed in Smolensk. "If these negotiations had not been allowed to come to naught, peace would have been signed. It would not have been before Moscow," went on the Emperor, "for your friend

Alexander, threatened by Finland, would not have been able to withdraw his troops in time to hold the line at Dwina. Finland in insurrection, and 20,000 Swedes and Oudinot at the gates of Petersburg, would have given him something to think about. If it had made no other difference than the distribution of fifty or sixty thousand men over the garrisons of Finland, or employed against the Turks, it would have made difference enough, in that my forces would have been superior on every front, and it was in this respect that Russia's real advantage over us was most appreciable."

He added a few further reflections on the disastrous results to highly important affairs of faulty timing, lack of foresight, the delay of even one day, sometimes even one hour:

"I bear Maret no ill will," he said, "for of course I cannot doubt his intentions, still less his cordiality, towards me. It is lucky for him that Ministers in France have not the same responsibility as they have in England: he would not come well out of this. I cannot do everything myself. Maret was the only man who had my secret; having once told him this, I was bound to think that he had understood me and that he was acting accordingly. He did not see that the vital point of this campaign lay in the forces to be provided by Poland, far more than in some intriguing and in the chattering of the Poles."

I pointed out to the Emperor that his power did not seem to me to have gained in general opinion during the past two or three years; indeed, that in my view we were declining even while we were visibly expanding. I paid tribute to the noble qualities of M. de Bassano; and this seemed to please the Emperor. But I pointed out to him that amongst the general public his Minister was more blamed for having been a supporter of this war, and generally for not opposing His Majesty's warlike zeal, than for the Turkish peace and the Russo-Swedish Alliance, because everyone knew that the Emperor ruled single-handed, and that his Ministers were neither accustomed nor able to settle problems out of hand, to dispose of millions, or to despatch agents with such powers on their own authority. I added that by acting in regard to these

Cabinets as he was now saying, M. de Bassano would have given clear indication to Russia that the war which we denied at Dresden was in fact resolved upon. These steps would thus have thwarted his policy.

The Emperor replied that, even if an indiscretion was to be feared in Sweden, it could not occur at Constantinople, and still less at Bucharest with the Turkish plenipotentiary, and that M. de Bassano, being his sole confidant, had had plenty of other resources at his disposal. To my expressions of doubt regarding this assertion, the Emperor replied to me humorously: "When I tell you a thing, you have got to believe it."

The conversation was interrupted by our arrival at a stage,¹ where supper had been ordered. The Emperor seemed displeased with me. He was tired, and his displeasure was heightened by the fact that he could not shave, as he wished to do, because Roustam had not arrived.² He lay down as usual on the long couch which is usually to be found in Polish houses, and rested there for an hour. Supper restored his good humour. That evening we were very well entertained. Was it in my honour? Or had the postmaster, as he approached the end of his course, been less afraid of indiscretion? I cannot tell. The fact remains that we were in an excellent house, enjoyed an excellent supper, and that the masters of the house did the honours with much care and discretion, if they did know that this was the Emperor.

Every morning between eight and nine o'clock, when coffee could be obtained at a stage, the Emperor drank a cup with milk, sometimes without emerging from the sledge. At night, between five and nine, according to the particular stage, the courier ordered supper for us. We rested there for an

¹ From Mariampol and Gragow, as far as Pultusk, exact details of the Emperor's itinerary are lacking. Neither Bourgoing, Chambray, Fain, nor Roustam have given precise information about this part of the journey, and Caulaincourt is as sparing of detail as they are. M. Albert Schuermans in his *Itinéraire général de Napoléon I.*, has reconstructed the itinerary thus: Goldapp (December 8th), Przasmic, Makow and Pultusk (December 9th); but he does not state the source of his information. But it would seem, from what Caulaincourt has already said that the two travellers passed by way of Augustowo.

² Roustam remained behind after Gragow, in a slower sledge than the Emperor's, and did not overtake him until reaching Warsaw. Cf. Roustam, *Mémoires, Revue Rétrospective*, VIII, 157.

hour, sometimes an hour and a half when the meal was slow in coming, so that M. Wonsowicz and the courier could also have time to eat. On arrival the Emperor sometimes made his toilet. He bathed his eyes, and stretched out on a couch, for since the time when we left his carriage, he could no longer go to bed. I took advantage of this time to make hasty notes of our conversations, at least of the matters which seemed to me to have some interest.

On December 10th, two hours before dawn, we reached Pultusk, where I dispensed with the services of our worthy postmaster, whom the Emperor suitably rewarded.¹ While the horses were being changed the Emperor, feeling chilled, entered the local postmaster's house, he being away from home. His young wife made haste to light a fire, and to prepare the coffee and soup which we asked for, as we had suffered severely from cold during that night. A Polish servant-girl, half-dressed, poked and blew the fire as well as she could, and nearly burnt her eyes over the poorest fire that ever was made. The Emperor inquired what this poor girl earned. It was so little that he remarked that the sum would hardly suffice to keep his heavy clothing in order. He bade me give her a few napoleons and tell her they were for her dowry. The poor child could not believe her eyes, and it was not, I think, until after our departure that she realized her joy and her small fortune.

The Emperor remarked that, in that class, it was possible to make many people happy with very little money.

"I am impatient, Caulaincourt," he added, "for the day of a general peace, so as to get some rest and be able to act the good man. We shall spend four months in every year travelling within our own frontiers. I shall go by short stages with my horses. I shall see the cottage firesides of our fair France. I wish to visit the Departments which lack proper communications, to build roads and canals, to help commerce and encourage industry. There is an enormous amount to be done in France; there are Departments where everything has

¹ The postmaster from Mariampol entrusted with organizing the change of horses on the route.

to be created. I have already busied myself with many improvements and through the Ministry of the Interior I have collected very valuable information. In ten years' time I shall be blessed as whole-heartedly as I am hated to-day. In some seaports commerce is selfish to the point of injustice, constantly anxious to profit, heedless if others lose. Whatever happens, it is I who have created industry in France. A few more years of perseverance, a few more bivouacs, and Marseilles and Bordeaux will soon be gathering in the millions they have failed to win."

The soup and coffee lingered, and the Emperor, numbed by the cold and the growing heat of the fire, fell asleep. I seized the opportunity to make notes. When he awoke, his sorry meal was soon swallowed and we clambered into our sledge again. Although the snow was knee-deep the Emperor visited the defences of Sierock and Praga.¹ We shook the snow off as best we could before re-entering our cage, for such was exactly the shape of the ancient box in which we were. It was so cold, and we were so pleased at having found this means of progress, in spite of the depth of snow everywhere, that the Emperor's vanity did not assert itself until we reached the gates of Warsaw. On reaching the bridge,² we could not repress a humble reflection on the modest equipage of the King of Kings. The aged box, which had once been red, had been set on a sled, and had four large windows, or rather panes of glass set in worm-eaten frames which did not close properly. The joins of this carcase, three-quarters rotten, gaped on all sides, and gave free access to the wind and snow, which I had constantly to be sweeping out of the interior of our domicile lest we should be soaked through by letting it melt on the seats.

¹ Sierock is half-way between Pultusk and Warsaw. Praga is a suburb on the right bank of the Vistula, opposite Warsaw.

² The Praga Bridge, over the Vistula, leading over to the Trambucks Gate.

CHAPTER VIII

BY SLEDGE WITH THE EMPEROR

2. *From Warsaw to Dresden*

IN spite of all these vexations the Emperor continued very cheerful. He seemed delighted to find himself at Warsaw, and was very curious to see whether he would be recognized. I think he would not have been sorry to have met someone who guessed his identity, for he traversed the city on foot and we did not take our seats in our humble sledge until we had crossed the main square.¹ It was so cold that no one who could keep warm within doors set foot abroad, and the Emperor's green velvet cloak with gold braid only attracted the attention of a few humble passers-by, more eager to regain their own firesides than curious about the names and quality of the travellers, whose costume however engaged their attention. They turned to glance, but did not stop. Anyhow, it would have been difficult to recognize the Emperor, for the fur cap he wore covered half his face.²

At eleven o'clock we alighted at the Hôtel de Saxe,³ where

¹ "As soon as the Emperor had crossed the Praga Bridge he alighted from his carriage and entered Warsaw on foot, making his way to the Hôtel d'Angleterre, where accommodation had been prepared for him. He asked to be taken to the hotel by way of the Cracow Boulevard (Krakowskie), which was at that time the main thoroughfare of Warsaw. 'I should like to find myself in that street again,' he said, 'for I once held a great review there.' " (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 194.)

² Napoleon "went the length of the Cracow Boulevard (Krakowskie) at the hour when that part of the city is most crowded. He wore a fur-lined green velvet cloak with gold braid, and a large sable cap. It is surprising that he was not followed nor recognized." (Countess Potocka, *Mémoires*, 334.) "The Emperor was wearing great fur boots; he was dressed in a magnificent green velvet cloak with gold braid; in addition he wore a hood, also of green velvet; his face was almost entirely concealed, so he was not recognized by anyone." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 195.)

³ Caulaincourt is mistaken in this. Chambray, Bourgoing, Countess Potocka and de Pradt (*Histoire de l'ambassade dans le grand-duché de Varsovie en 1812*, 209) agree in saying that the Emperor put up at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, and not the Hôtel de Saxe.

Amodru had arrived only a few moments previously. I at once sent to the Director-General of Posts to order the Duke of Vicenza's horses for Glogau, for it was always I who was the distinguished traveller, and the Emperor simply my secretary, under the name of M. de Reyneval.

Having established the Emperor in front of a poor fire in a room on the ground floor at the end of the courtyard,¹ I made my way to the ambassador's residence, which was near at hand in the Saxony Palace.² On entering the house I encountered M. de Rumigny, one of the secretaries of the legation³ who had been with me at Petersburg, and whom I was delighted to meet again. He announced me to the Ambassador who was not a little astonished to see me, especially dressed as I was,⁴ but who was even more amazed, believing neither his ears nor his eyes, when I said that the Emperor was at the Hôtel de Saxe and was asking for him.

"The Emperor!" he repeated again and again in astonishment.

When he had somewhat recovered his surprise he said:

"How does he come to be here, Your Grace? How is the Emperor?"

These were M. de Pradt's first questions.

¹ M. de Pradt, whose hatred and dishonesty render his narrative so suspect, cannot, however, have had any inducement to be other than truthful when he described the Emperor's apartment in the following terms (*Histoire de l'ambassade*, 210): "He was in a low-ceilinged little room, freezing cold, with the shutters half-drawn to prevent his being recognized. A wretched Polish maidservant was on her knees puffing at a fire of green wood which rebelled at her efforts, sputtering out more damp into the chimney than heat into the room."

² On arriving at Warsaw M. de Pradt first occupied an apartment on the ground floor of the residence of Count Stanislas Potocki; he subsequently moved to the Bruhl Palace, which belonged to the King of Saxony. Cf. Countess Potocka, *Mémoires*, 308.

³ Marie Hippolyte Gueilly, Marquis de Rumigny, born in Paris, September 7, 1784, died at Brussels, February 14, 1871, was Secretary to the Embassy, and was later attached to the Emperor's Cabinet. Under Louis-Philippe he was French Minister to Switzerland, and Ambassador at Turin and Brussels.

⁴ M. de Pradt, who has travestied this interview of December 10th into a caricature, in his *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 207, says: "The doors of my room were flung open and gave entrance to a tall man who stalked in, supported by one of my embassy secretaries. 'Let us go; come, follow me!' said this phantom. His head was enveloped in a silken shawl, his face lost to sight in the depths of the fur in which he seemed buried, his gait hampered by fur-lined top-boots. It was a kind of ghost-scene."

"The Emperor is on his way to Paris; we have left the army at Smorgoni; by now it must be in position at Wilna."

"The Emperor would have been more comfortable here than at the hotel."

"He wishes to remain incognito; we are starting again at once."

"Will you not take something, if only a plate of soup, Your Grace?"

"I am taking luncheon with the Emperor at the hotel. But send a bottle of Burgundy there. His Majesty prefers that wine; and as he has been unable to obtain any on the road he will be very glad to find a good glass."

"Is the Emperor's health good? What state is the army in?"

"The army is in a dire plight, overwhelmed by misery, hunger and cold. Only the Guard still looks like a body of troops."

"M. de Bassano writes of nothing but successes. . . ."

"Actually we have beaten the Russians everywhere, even at the crossing of the Beresina, where we took 1600 prisoners, as I counted myself."

"M. de Bassano said 6000."

"The fact remains that we beat the Russians, who ought to have beaten us."

"Why make out that we have taken 6000 prisoners. And why, in such grave circumstances, when it is essential that he should know the truth, write to an Ambassador as if he were the editor of the *Moniteur*?"¹

"The number of prisoners is of little matter, as we cannot keep them."

"What is to hinder us?"

"How are we to feed prisoners when our own men are littering the road-side, dying of hunger?"

"Have we suffered heavy losses?"

"Too heavy," I answered, with a deep sigh. "These

¹ "It was not until December 2nd that I was told of the crossing of the Beresina. The Duke of Bassano, in his usual way, turned it into a marvellous victory." (De Pradt, *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 206.)

disastrous results are well worthy of those who urged this war. What folly!"

"Not everyone urged it. Not everyone has deceived the Emperor as to what would happen. But what does it matter? Your Grace will have justice done you now, for it is well known that you did your best to prevent it. As for me, I have not hesitated to displease the Emperor by exposing the true facts of the situation and the state of Poland. I continually write to the Duke of Bassano; but he only replies by sending accounts of victories which deceive nobody here. This country is ruined. It has been crushed."¹

I brought the conversation to a close by leaving the Ambassador to change his clothes, and returned to the Emperor. He was all the more impatient to see M. de Pradt because, being dissatisfied with him, he was anxious to show his displeasure. Ever since leaving Sierock the Emperor had grown more excited as the moment of meeting the Ambassador grew nearer, and he repeated again and again what he had already said about him. For this reason he did not alight at his ambassador's house, which I had suggested as more comfortable and convenient for seeing the various members of the Polish Government he wished to interview.

"I refuse to stay with a man whom I am going to dismiss," he said. "He has given me too much cause for complaint."

I passed over in silence what the Emperor added to this speech and so often repeated in the access of his ill-humour. He blamed M. de Pradt for meanness, for lack of tact, for misdirecting the zeal of our adherents.

"He has ruined all my plans with his indolence," said the Emperor. "He is a chatterbox, and nothing more. I have often wished to see Talleyrand here."

The Ambassador arrived just when the Emperor was saying these last words.² Napoleon received him coldly. M. de Pradt came forward eagerly and asked how His Majesty was.

¹ Compare this account with that of Pradt (*Histoire de l'ambassade*, 208).

² This was at half-past one, according to Pradt (*Histoire de l'ambassade*, 209). This would appear to be rather late if, as Caulaincourt says above, Napoleon arrived at the *Hôtel d'Angleterre* at eleven o'clock.

His words had the ring of genuine concern;¹ but this seemed to be even less in his favour. The Emperor would rather have been blamed, even criticized and found fault with by any other man, and was less disposed to tolerate this man-to-man air of interest on the part of one against whom he was deeply incensed. Perceiving the effect he was producing, M. de Pradt became colder and more reserved. These preliminaries showed me clearly that I should be doing the Ambassador a service by leaving him with no witness, and so giving him an opportunity of private conversation with the Emperor; and I left the room. But the same reason made the Emperor desire the presence of a third party, to increase M. de Pradt's discomfort, and he bade me remain. When I explained, however, that certain orders had to be given for the continuation of our journey, and a cloak had to be bought for him, he let me go, bidding me send for Count Stanislas Potocki,² as well as the Minister of Finance.³ He added that I was to get everything ready for a speedy departure, and to return immediately. I bought the cloak for the Emperor, who suffered severely from the cold at night time although I covered him with half my own cloak, thereby freezing me and making myself exceedingly uncomfortable.

I hurried forward the dinner and returned to the room adjoining the Emperor's, to send off a courier to Wilna and an outrider to precede us to Posen. As the door between the two rooms closed imperfectly, I could not help hearing the Emperor heaping on his Ambassador all the reproaches he had already enumerated in his conversations with me.⁴ He concluded by saying that neither his tone, his conduct, nor anything about him, had been French. He reproached him with

¹ "Only genuine feeling could inspire or excuse in a subject speaking to his sovereign, the tone in which I asked, 'Are you well? I have been so worried about you, but here you are. How relieved I am to see you!'" (Pradt, *Histoire*, 211.)

² Count Stanislas-Kostka Potocki, father-in-law of Countess Anna, was born in 1757, and died at Willanovie, September 14, 1821. He was President of the Council General of the Polish Confederation. Cf. Bignon, *Souvenirs d'un diplomate : la Pologne en 1812-1813*, 1864, 40.

³ Count Thadeus Mostowski, died in Paris, December 6, 1842.

⁴ Compare this account with M. de Pradt's attempt to ridicule the conversation in his *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 213.

making plans for a campaign, with acting the soldier when he knew nothing about military matters, and added that he ought to confine himself to politics and saying his Mass. He had been sent to Warsaw to represent France honourably, and not make petty economies and lay plans for a fortune for himself, which would have been assured him had he performed his duty as he ought. But as it was, he had achieved nothing but blunders.

M. de Pradt tried to justify himself, protesting his devotion, his zeal, his regret for any errors he had committed, his desire to do better. He defended and justified Poland for not having done all the Emperor desired for the success of the Russian expedition. He enumerated the sacrifices she had made, the forces she had raised, which he placed as high as over 80,000 men.¹ He declared that everyone was ruined, that not a crown-piece could be found in the whole country, that financial help would have to be given if anything at all was to be done. The more M. de Pradt justified himself, the angrier the Emperor became. He blamed him for the incalculable consequences that must ensue from his neglect to call up the levies, and added that, from the Ambassador's own words, it was plain that he was courting foolish popularity, that a clever man like himself ought to have seen, and made the Poles understand, that to prolong the struggle by withholding the means of bringing it to a speedy end, would merely injure themselves.

The Emperor summoned me; the Ambassador's presence seemed to be infuriating him. His gestures, the way he shrugged his shoulders showed his temper so clearly that I really shared the embarrassment of his victim, who was in an agony of mortification. I felt I should be doing them both a kindness by going out for a moment, and returning an instant later to inform His Majesty that dinner was served. But he had again started his tale of reproaches and went on, now with vehemence, now with cold disdain, until, seeing a card on the mantelpiece he stopped suddenly in the middle

¹ "I explained to him why and how the dispersion of the Polish forces had ended in reducing an army of 80,000 men practically to invisibility." (De Pradt, *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 212.)

of a sentence, snatched it up, wrote a few words on it, and handed it to me.¹

All this time M. de Pradt was trying to get in a few words in self-defence, casting blame on all the French authorities, of whom he complained bitterly, as well as of the generals, etc. It seemed to me that, on some grounds, his remarks were not without reason.

This criticism of the military aspect annoyed the Emperor still more; he would not even permit any comments on the operations undertaken by Prince Schwarzenberg. As for the tactics of the troops in the Duchy of Poland, of which the Emperor actually approved no more than did the Ambassador, he told him sharply that he would not allow a priest to pass any judgment on the matter. The Emperor spoke of the defence of the Duchy, which he considered would be a simple matter if the levies were raised, although the Ambassador held that the country was exposed and in great peril. The Emperor always argued on the hypothesis that the army would remain at Wilna, and that Schwarzenberg would do what was expected of him. He anticipated holding and defending the Duchy by Polish levies, and by a general rising. He even wished to cover his army quarters by a screen of those Polish Cossacks of which he was never tired of talking, though, for lack of money, they had not yet even been collected into depots.

The discussion had by now taken a turn for the better and was no longer disagreeably personal, and M. de Pradt, zealous in military controversies, adopted a rather dogmatic tone in refuting, with some reason as it seemed to me, what the Emperor laid down in the tone of a master who expects silence rather than disagreement. The Ambassador even seemed to

¹ This paper, as it transpires later, was an order to instruct Maret to arrange the immediate replacement of M. de Pradt. The latter had observed the incident; at a later period Vitrolles, who enjoyed his confidence, was to write: "While the Archbishop was carrying on his impertinent discourse, Bonaparte took up a pencil as though to write some urgent order, and passed over to M. de Caulaincourt a paper on which he had scribbled 'Get rid of this scoundrel.' The Master of the Horse went out of the room as though to carry out the order, and shortly afterwards called the Archbishop and dismissed him, I know not on what pretext." (Vitrolles, *Mémoires*, I, 195.)

allow himself more freedom in his observations than would have been permissible in private conversation. He saw safety only in what we no longer possessed—well-organized and well-paid armies; and he asserted that without money not a horse nor a man could be hoped for in the Duchy.

"Then what do the Poles want?" the Emperor demanded sharply. "It is for them we are fighting, for them that I have lavished my treasure. If they mean to do nothing for their own cause, it is useless for them to work up such a passion for the restoration of their independence."

"They want to be Prussian," answered the Ambassador.

"Why not Russian?"¹ rejoined the Emperor indignantly.

He turned his back on M. de Pradt, telling him to return in half an hour with the Ministers who had been summoned.

When M. de Pradt had gone the Emperor launched into a long and violent tirade against him, accusing him of being afraid of the Russians, and of having, throughout the campaign, frightened rather than reassured the Poles and of having ruined all his plans in Poland.

"Carry out at once the order I gave you," he said sharply, referring to what he had written on the card which he had handed to me in M. de Pradt's presence. It said: "Tell Maret that fear of the Russians has made the Archbishop of Malines lose his head; he is to be sent back and someone else entrusted with his duties."

I had thrust the card in my pocket. At the moment I continued pacing up and down with the Emperor, without answering or executing his orders.

Noticing his silence, I reminded him that dinner had been growing cold for some time, but he paid little attention to this, directing me again to carry out the order. After a moment I pointed out to him that this change would produce a bad effect on the Council at Warsaw.

"If M. de Pradt," I said, "has, as Your Majesty thinks, wheedled the members of the Council, he will be all the more agreeable to them at a difficult time. No harm will be done

¹ These words are almost textually identical with those reported by Pradt in his *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 213.

by leaving him here for some time. He will do his best to remedy his errors, and circumstances will stimulate his zeal. He will even do better than a new man could do. If you dismiss him, he will say it is for having protected the interests of the Duchy, and that will have a bad effect."

The Emperor then enumerated the different orders which the Duke of Bassano had given M. de Pradt concerning levies. He went into lengthy details as to the means placed at the disposal of the Ambassador and the Duchy, and concluded by saying:

"You shall write from Posen. Now let us dine, so that I can see the Ministers and then start off."

So that the Emperor should not go back on his decision, I threw the card in the fire in his presence. Preoccupied by affairs, anxious to see the Ministers and be on the road again, His Majesty did not remain long at table, although the cup of coffee we had snatched at Pultusk had refreshed us but little.

"Business nourishes me," said the Emperor, "and I have a surfeit from discontent. This priest has annoyed me. What impudence! He complains of everyone, criticizes everything. What has *he* ever done to entitle him to blame others. He is losing this campaign for me."

The Emperor also received Count Taillis, lieutenant-general in command at Warsaw, who had nothing to say in praise of the Ambassador's behaviour in the moment of crisis.

The Emperor accorded a good reception to the Ministers who accompanied M. de Pradt.¹ These gentlemen spoke of the dangers His Majesty had run, and their happiness in seeing him in such good health. His presence was in itself sufficient guarantee of a brighter future, etc. The Emperor brushed aside the idea that he had ever run any risks. He laughingly observed that rest and quiet were only the lot of sluggish monarchs, adding that he thrived on fatigue. He told them that the army was still strong in numbers, with more than 150,000 men, which was hardly the truth. The Russians, according to him, were not holding out; they had been beaten in every direction, even at the Beresina. These

¹ Potocki and Mostowski.

Russians were no longer the men of Eylau and Friedland. Before three months had elapsed he would have as strong an army as he had when he opened the campaign. His arsenals were full, he had all the essentials in equipment and troops to make a splendid army. From his private cabinet in the Tuileries he could impose his will on Vienna and Berlin better than from army headquarters. "I carry more weight when I am on my throne in the Tuileries than when I am leading my army," he said. He spoke of Marengo and Essling, battles that had been almost lost yet which, a couple of hours later, had placed Austria at his disposal.¹

I went into the other room to make certain that everything was ready. The sledges were drawn up before the door.² I paid the hotel-keeper, gave a few directions, and made notes of the strange conversation I had just heard. After dinner, while the Emperor was at his toilet, I jotted down particulars of what I had said to the Ambassador and of his conversation with the Emperor. As soon as I was able to pay attention to what was being said, I heard the Emperor attributing his reverses solely to the climate, and admitting that he had possibly stayed too long at Moscow because, having sent Lauriston to Russian headquarters, he had hoped to be able to conclude a peace. He said that Wilna would be held, agreeing that the Russians had shown strength of character, and that they loved the Tsar Alexander. The burning of Moscow, he acknowledged, had upset his plans. He emphasized the fact that it was the Russians who had set fire to their own capital. He spoke of the need for showing strength of mind on our side, adding that even grave reverses might lead to astounding successes. He talked with eagerness of the levies to be raised, especially of the indispensable Polish Cossacks.

The Ministers emphasized the distress of their country.

¹ See Countess Potocka's account of the interview between Napoleon and Potocki. Her concluding remarks are: "The fascination that this extraordinary man exercised over all who heard him was so powerful that my father-in-law, who had been in the depths of gloom when he left us, returned full of hope." (*Mémoires*, 352.)

² This is to say, the Emperor's sledge and that with which Roustam had come to join his master.

The Emperor did not seem to pay attention to this. M. de Pradt supported them generously when they asked for money. The Emperor granted some millions from the Courland contribution and from the depreciation of the coinage,¹ and concluded by announcing the imminent arrival of the diplomatic corps from Wilna.² He then started to talk of his journey, and then I entered the room. The Ministers urged the Emperor to rest for a few hours while relays were being organized along the road. They inquired whether he was going to take the Silesia route by Glogau.

"Yes, by Prussia," answered the Emperor.

This crossing of the Prussian territory, short though it was, worried him. He told them, questioning me as he did so, that I had given all the necessary instructions for relays, and that he was about to start at once. He then dismissed the Ministers very graciously, amid their renewed expressions of devotion, in which they were all joined by M. de Pradt, who seemed to have forgotten the rebukes administered before dinner.

We mounted our sledge without further delay,³ and once again the Emperor gave vent to his spleen against M. de Pradt. He passed the most bitter comments on the Archbishop's terror when the Russians had nearly reached the Duchy, and on the bad example given by his behaviour on that occasion. He spoke of his breeding and his manners, which were out of keeping, His Majesty said, with the education he had received, with the company in which he must have mixed, particularly with the religious calling he had chosen. The Emperor kept on alleging that M. de Pradt had lost him Poland and ruined his campaign. It had been a mistake to

¹ "He granted, as a loan, a sum of two to three millions in copper from Piedmont, which had been lying at Warsaw for three months, and three or four millions in paper, drawn from the contributions of Courland." (De Pradt, *Histoire*, 219.)

² On December 11th, Napoleon wrote to Maret from Kutno: "Let the diplomatic corps know that I am going to Paris, that they must no longer remain with the army." (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19384.) Throughout the campaign the Ambassadors had remained at Wilna, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

³ According to Countess Potocka (*Mémoires*, 335) they left about nine o'clock in the evening; according to Bourgoing (*Souvenirs militaires*, 196) it was at seven.

pay heed to foolish intrigues and not send Talleyrand, who would have served him well, as he had previously done at Frinckenstein.¹

The most difficult part of our journey had certainly been accomplished. We had still to cross the little strip of Prussian territory after Glogau,² and this worried the Emperor more than all the rest of his journey. We travelled at great speed, but when a shaft of our sledge broke we were obliged to stop at Kutno to have it mended, which delayed us more than two hours.³ The sub-prefect recognized the Emperor, and gave him the best reception that lay in his power. His wife and sister, two pretty Polish girls, were thrilled with excitement at having His Majesty under their roof, and were delighted beyond measure at seeing him in good health. No physiognomy is so expressive as the Polish. The Emperor appreciated the warmth of his reception, but had so much business on hand that there was no opportunity for chatting with the ladies or the sub-prefect, and he employed his time in dictating orders for the Duke of Bassano and for Warsaw. He instructed his Ministers⁴ to hurry on the levies and the arming of the Duchy, informing them of what he had granted the Poles and ordering the Duke to send a fresh courier to Vienna and to Prince Schwarzenberg. He also issued orders to Lauriston, who was to go to Warsaw,⁵ instructing him to remain there, to assume command of the entire army, and to arm Modlin and

¹ April-May, 1807.

² It was before and not after Glogau that the Dresden road crossed Silesian Prussia before entering Saxony. In his *Itinéraire de Napoléon Ier de Smorgoni à Paris*, 66, Bourgoing says: "He [Napoleon] followed the straight line Lenczizca-Glogau-Bautzen."

³ December 11, 1812. Between Warsaw and Kutno the road passed by way of Lowicz. According to Countess Potocka (*Mémoires*, 335), who had it, she says, from Wonsowicz, as soon as he arrived in the city Napoleon wanted to turn aside from his road to visit Countess Walewska at her château at Walewice. Caulaincourt was opposed to this. Madame Walewska had left Warsaw, where de Pradt's tactlessness rendered her position difficult, and had gone straight to Paris some time before Napoleon passed through Warsaw.

⁴ See Napoleon's letter to Maret dated Kutno, December 11, 1812, in the *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19384.

⁵ Lauriston received the order to go to Warsaw in a letter from the Emperor, dated at Smorgoni, December 5, 1812. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19381.) His instructions were: "You will order provisions, see to the levy of the confederation of the nobles, and endeavour to arm them."

Sierock. To General du Taillis,¹ whom he had seen at Warsaw, he confirmed in writing the orders he had given him verbally, that he was to keep all the troops passing through the city, and to organize and arm the National Guard, etc.

The Emperor grew impatient with my slow writing, my fingers being still numb with cold, and decided to write himself while I made minutes of what he had already dictated. But his own fingers were stiff, his handwriting was at the best illegible, and after writing two letters which he could not even read himself he was obliged to dictate fresh ones to me. Dinner put a stop to this correspondence. I preserved the two historic letters written in the Emperor's own hand, and sent off the despatches while he dined. By this time the sledge was repaired. His Majesty barely took time to eat; I managed to snatch a piece of bread with which to make my meal as we went on our way. The Emperor was deeply touched by the reception he had met with at Kutno, and instructed me to tell Duroc, when we arrived in Paris, to send a gift to the sub-prefect's wife.

During the journey from Warsaw to Kutno the Emperor spoke of England, of the difficulty of forcing her to make peace unless some financial crisis or internal embarrassment forced the hands of the Cabinet. At the moment he seemed to regret that his idea for the restoration of Poland had embroiled him with Russia. He agreed that she was of great weight in the Continental System.

"Rumiantsof," he went on, "was aware how advantageous to me this alliance would be. He was no genius, but he was a man of sound judgment, with a thorough understanding of the European situation as it developed after Tilsit, and as we envisaged it at Erfurt. He also realized so fully the advantages we should draw from the alliance in France's relation to England, that he would not even believe in hostilities until we had crossed the Niemen. He always

¹ Antoine Jean Baptiste Amable Ramond du Bosc, Count du Taillis, born at Nangis, November 12, 1760, died at Paris, February 3, 1851, formerly aide-de-camp to Berthier, had lost his right arm in 1807. Promoted General of Division, June 29, 1807, he was appointed Governor of Warsaw at the beginning of the 1812 campaign, having filled similar posts at Munich and Erfurt.

doubted my real intention of attacking Russia. He thought my object was to make them shut their eyes to what had happened, and that my hostile demonstrations were only to force Russia not to receive neutrals and to consider herself fortunate that I stopped at threats.

"I could not permit this admission of pretended neutrals," the Emperor continued, "as it furnished the English with a means of eluding the continental blockade. But I would have passed it over, and we should have reached an understanding if I had been able to entertain any hope of persuading the Tsar Alexander to make a great march on India. At the point we had reached in our struggle with England, whose Cabinet was staking all, this would have been the only way of alarming the London merchants. The nation would have forced the Government to treat for peace. But after Erfurt I felt suspicion in the air. For my part, affairs in Spain were more or less spoiling my other projects. Alexander and Rumiantsof did not incline so much as I had expected to the partition of Turkey, and thus all my plans made at Tilsit had to be modified. I may have been obliged to look at things from another angle. By some means or other we must get out of the ditch we are in, find some means of forcing England to make peace, weaken Russia, solve the problem of Europe by creating a great buffer State. It would be a splendid and noble thing to rob England of any hope of forming a new coalition, by sapping the strength of the only great Power which could still be her ally."

The Emperor told me that he had long thought that Constantinople was coveted by Russia. In the hope of an expedition, or at least a demonstration, against India, he had planned another expedition by sea (possibly independent of the land operation), to which he would have been able to furnish a strong contingent, if he could have persuaded the Russians to allow a French corps to march through their country. But from what he knew, and from what the Tsar and Rumiantsof had told him, this would have been difficult to negotiate.

The Emperor appears to have planned his expedition

against India in the following manner. He had obtained from the navy all the necessary information. It seemed to him that the main obstacle was the impossibility of carrying sufficient water for 25-30,000 men for such a long voyage. Otherwise he had found no insuperable difficulty. He would have directed the expedition against Surat,¹ a landing being made at some point on the Mahratta coast, where the people were natural enemies of the English and ready at any moment to take up arms against them.² The expeditionary force would have been 30,000 strong. They would put in at only one port, Mauritius, to water and take on board provisions and leave any sick. These latter would have been replaced by two or three thousand negroes for whom the colonists would be paid in ready money.

France, the Empress, and the King of Rome were subjects of daily conversation. His Majesty never wearied of exclaiming how glad he would be to see them again, and expressed the most tender affection for them. The Empress he praised constantly, talking of his home life with a feeling and a simplicity that did one good to hear; of France and the French with an enthusiasm which was consoling after so many sacrifices.

"I make myself out to be worse than I really am," he said to me laughingly. "For I have observed that the French are always ready to eat out of one's hand. They lack seriousness; consequently, that quality impresses them most. I am supposed to be severe, even hard! So much the better! It saves me from having to be so! My firmness passes for insensibility; and it is partly to this impression that we owe the existing state of good order, although the Revolution is so recent, and although we have a generation among us reared in disorder and with no conception of morality or religion. So I do not complain of my reputation. Come, Caulaincourt, I am man! Whatever some people may say,

¹ A port of Hindustan, on the left bank of the Tapti. It had belonged to the English since 1800.

² The Mahrattas occupied the entire region of Hindustan from sea to sea between the province of Agra and the Krichna. After the fall of Tippoo Sahib, in 1799, they were in constant strife against the English.

I have bowels and a heart, though it is the heart of a sovereign. The tears of a duchess move me to no pity whatsoever, but I am touched by the woes of peoples. I want to see them happy, and the French shall be so. If I live ten years, there will be contentment everywhere. Do you believe that I do not like to please men? It does me good to see a happy face, but I am compelled to defend myself against this natural disposition, lest advantage be taken of it. I proved this more than once with Josephine who was always asking me for things, and wheedled them out of me with tears when I ought to have refused her."

The Emperor often asked me if I too should not be delighted to see my loved ones again. This good and natural manifestation of His Majesty's real feelings refreshed me more than I can say. I should have liked the ears of all Europe to hear his words, and every echo to repeat them. I am positive that I lost not one syllable of this conversation, which I would gladly have prolonged indefinitely.

The Emperor was most anxious to meet his couriers in order to get the eagerly awaited letters from France—the first we had received since Smorgoni. He accordingly pressed on our journey as much as he could. At Posen we rejoined the road the army had taken on its way to Königsberg.

Meanwhile the Emperor reviewed his Cabinet. He praised the Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès as a man of prudent counsel and a great lawyer. His equitable and singularly clear judgment had thrown much light upon several articles in the Code, notably those presenting the greatest difficulties. Alluding to the death of the King: "Only fear," he said, "prevented him from voting his acquittal.¹ Cambacérès was far from being a revolutionary. He was a man worthy of confidence and incapable of abusing it; he had always made the best use of the trust given him; his high repute was most justly acquired."

The Emperor cited the Duke of Rovigo as a man entirely

¹ In the Convention, Cambacérès voted "Yes" on the question of the guilt of Louis XVI, but on the question of the application of the death penalty he voted for a reprieve until the cessation of hostilities.

devoted to him, a man of strong character and independent viewpoint. He had a good heart, he said; he is thoroughly sound, even obliging. He would often have been duped if the Emperor had not stopped him. But he was too self-interested, and this displeased His Majesty, who had decided to deprive him of the gaming monopoly for he was incessantly asking for money although he had already been given large sums, and his fortune, since he became a Minister, had risen to five or six millions. As for the rest, the public was unjust in its opinion of him. It was held up against him that he had been present at the execution of the Duke of Enghien.

"But," he added, "he had received orders to attend the execution, and, being commandant of the picked *gendarmerie*, it was his duty to be there. Anybody else would have obeyed orders exactly as he did. He was a much better man, much less of an inquisitor, than Fouché. It is now the fashion to laugh at Savary. It was, indeed, ridiculous that a Divisional General, Minister of Police, should be taken from his bed and whisked off to gaol by a madman just escaped from a lunatic asylum.¹ This incident very naturally made all Paris roar with laughter, and ridicule is more fatal to those in authority than their mistakes."

Turning later to the Duke of Otranto, he said: "The man is merely a schemer. He is prodigiously clever and facile with the pen. He is a thief, and steals anything he can lay hands on. He must be worth millions. He was a great revolutionary, a man of blood. He thought to atone for his misdeeds, or anyhow to cause them to be forgotten, by making up to the relatives of his victims, and in all appearance he has become the protector of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. He is a man whom it may be useful to employ, for he is still the fugleman of many revolutionaries and is, besides, exceedingly capable. But I can no longer place any confidence in him."

The Duke of Gaeta,² who appeared next in this survey,

¹ A reference to the Malet conspiracy.

² Marius Michel Charles Gaudin, born at Saint-Denis, January 16, 1756, died at Gennevilliers, November 5, 1841, Duke of Gaeta, August 15, 1809. He was Minister of Finance from November 11, 1799, until April 3, 1814, and from March 20 to June 23, 1815.

was, His Majesty said, a good financier, a man of method and probity, who had rendered great services in his sphere. M. de Barbé-Marbois,¹ whom he named next, was a schemer with the appearance of a Quaker and the deceptive semblance of an honest man.

"I was duped by him for a long time," he said, "for he professed a certain rigour in his principles and a severity of judgment on other people and on events, which made me think he would be no more indulgent to himself. He is discontented with everything, fondling power, detesting it and belittling it. He is, at heart, an unprincipled man, full of envy and fault-finding, devoid of capacity. Thinking him a man of talents, I placed great confidence in him for some time, only to discover too late that I was mistaken. I paid dearly for the error. He is safe in the Court of Accounts; he cannot make blunders there, and he is obliged to carry out his new functions with the probity for which he is renowned."

Upon my observing that he had the reputation of being virtuous, above all, unimpeachably honest:

"Oh, he is honest enough," replied the Emperor. "As for being virtuous, that is simply a part he plays; at heart he is a rascal."

Of M. de Fontanes² the Emperor said:

"He is too much of a sycophant. He has great talent. He serves me with zeal and for the moment is directing Public Instruction very competently. The Revolution has made us too full of the Greeks and Romans; we must give our children monarchical ideas, and that is quite in accordance with Fontanes's opinions; or so, at least, he proclaims. If I allowed him, he would even go too far in that direction. He is a man of parts, but his head is small. If I had not checked him, he would have given us an education of Louis XV's

¹ Marquis François de Barbé-Marbois, born at Metz, January 31, 1745, died at Paris, January 12, 1837. He was Minister of the Public Treasury from September 27, 1801, to January 27, 1806, when he was dismissed in consequence of an imprudent financial measure. In 1808 he was appointed President of the Court of Accounts.

² Fontanes had been Chancellor of the University since March 17, 1808.

style. He thought it would please me, but I stopped him. One day I said to him; 'Monsieur de Fontanes, at least leave us the republic of letters!'¹ These words brought him on the right road again. I am not afraid of energetic men; I know how to use and guide them. Besides, I can do nothing opposed to equality, and youth, like the nation, clings to equality. If you have talent I can push you forward; if you have merit I can protect you. This is recognized, and it is very useful to me. Fontanes would have reared marquises for me; their only place is on the stage; moreover, ideas to-day have dethroned them there since Molé left the stage² and Fleury³ disappeared. I need councillors of state, prefects, officers, engineers, professors. It is essential to give an impetus to teaching and to season these young heads of Greeks and Romans. It is important to give a monarchic turn to the energy of these memories; for that is history. I shall give my first attention to education; it will be my first care as soon as peace is established, for it is the safeguard of the future. I want it to be public for all, even that of my son, in part. I have a great plan in that connection."

To my great regret this conversation was interrupted by our arrival in the early hours of the morning [December 12th] at the Hôtel de Saxe, at Posen.

"Give me my despatches," were the Emperor's first words.

¹ In 1806 Fontanes, at that time President of the Legislature, had inserted in the *Mercur de France* the advance notice of a book he had written in support of absolute monarchy. It was this that drew the reply from Napoleon quoted here.

² François René Molet, or Molé, born at Paris, November 24, 1734, made his first appearance at the Théâtre Français, October 7, 1754. He died at Paris, December 11, 1802. Molé had abandoned with reluctance the parts of love-sick grand gentlemen which he had formerly rendered with incomparable art. (L. de Lanza de Laborie, *Paris sous Napoléon: le Théâtre Français*, 104.)

³ Abraham Joseph Bénard, known as Fleury, was born at Chartres, October 27, 1750, and made his debut at the Théâtre Français, March 7, 1774; he quitted the stage, April 1, 1818, and died at Valencay, March 3, 1822. "In his great comedy parts, which he had shared with Molé and played alone after the latter's death, instead of the impetuosity and seductiveness which Molé threw into the characters, he exhibited a certain dry distinction, with an aristocratic falsetto voice, that portrayed so exactly the gentlemen of the old Court that it made the period live again to all who had known those times and the old regime." (*Ibid.*, p. 107.)

LETTERS FROM HOME

In accordance with my instructions, the director of posts¹ had kept the two which came through. The Emperor's impatience was such that he would have ripped open the cases if he had had a knife at hand. Numb with cold, my fingers were not quick enough for him in working the combinations of the padlocks. At last I handed him the Empress's letter and one from Madame de Montesquiou enclosing the report on the King of Rome. This was the first news since leaving Wilna, for luck had been against us, as we had met no courier between that town and Mariampol. The Emperor had never ceased to speculate on the impression that would be caused by the absence of any news of the army, so it can easily be imagined with what eagerness he read the despatches from the Arch-Chancellor and the other Ministers. I could not tear the envelopes open quickly enough to keep pace with his impatience. He scanned the pages rather than read them, to obtain a general idea of their contents. After this hasty review, he settled down to perusing carefully those despatches which had struck him as being the most important. He did me the honour of reading aloud the letters from the Empress and Madame de Montesquiou.

"Haven't I got an excellent wife?" he said.

The particulars that the Empress gave him about his son, all of which were confirmed by the governess, delighted His Majesty. Notwithstanding that he was so preoccupied with affairs, in this moment he was just a good husband, indeed the best of husbands, and the fondest of fathers. I cannot describe my pleasure in contemplating him at such moments. His joy, his happiness, glowing in every feature, went to my heart.

He made me read the Arch-Chancellor's letters, as well as communications from the Ministers of Police and War. I took advantage of the momentary freedom afforded me while the Emperor was going through his correspondence to give orders for the continuation of our journey. The carriage had been unable to catch us up,² and as the Emperor had given

¹ At Posen the Emperor rejoined the line of communication between France and the army, which he had left at Mariampol.

² This refers to the carriage left behind at Gragow. See above, p. 416.

me no time to take money out of it when we parted from it, all my funds were exhausted. I had some money brought me by the director of couriers.¹ I notified the General commanding in Glogau that we should be arriving, and that he was to have the city gates ready² and supper prepared for us. I then employed the two hours left before starting in putting my notes in order, and completing the particulars I had taken of our last conversation since leaving Warsaw. The Emperor took an hour's rest. He lunched, and we then took to the road again. We were now meeting the bearers of news, and the farther we proceeded the shorter we made the intervals between receiving despatches. In this manner we were able to receive in one day's journey our friends' letters covering three or four days. Every letter received was a source of fresh happiness to the Emperor. He made me read most of his despatches, except those in the post packet.³ Only once did he give me a few extracts from this to read, saying, as he did so:

"What imprudence! What fools men are! I have not sufficient opinion of mankind to be malicious, as they say I am, or eager for revenge!"

The Emperor's observation was very just. The imprudence and impudence expressed in some of these intercepted letters afforded opportunities for incontestable proof that His Majesty was neither malicious nor vindictive; for in the circumstances he might well have justly been severe, whereas when I reached Paris I saw the two persons who had given occasion to these observations, and they had not been in the slightest degree molested or reprimanded. One of them occupied a position at Court.

The Emperor was highly satisfied with the particulars he received as to the situation in Paris and in France. Everyone

¹ When they left Smorgoni, by order of Duroc 50,000 francs had been paid over to Caulaincourt by Peyrusse, Treasurer of the Privy Purse. (Peyrusse, *Mémoires et archives*, 151.) On his part, Méneval had given 14,000 francs to Constant, who had stayed behind.

² That is to say, that the city gates should be opened on the arrival of the travellers during the course of the night.

³ Enclosing the communications from the "Cabinet Noir."

GENERAL CLARKE

was so accustomed to seeing him triumph over difficulties, and even extract some advantage from events which seemed the most contrary, that public confidence had been but little shaken by the long silence of which people complained. This interruption in communications had not produced exactly the effect that he had anticipated.

"In the actual circumstances," the Emperor said, "this sense of security is rather a pity, for, when it comes, the army bulletin will upset confidence.¹ A certain disquiet would have been preferable; it would have prepared the ground for bad news."

Speaking of the Minister of War,² he called him a typical courtier, the most conceited man he had ever met:

"The greatest happiness that could befall him would be if he could persuade everyone that his grandfather had come out of the Ark.³ He is an honest man, of mediocre talents, without character, and so addicted to flattering that one can never tell how much reliance to place on any opinion he may express. He does not know me yet," added the Emperor. "He imagines I am like Louis XV, and that he has to get round me and be agreeable to me. If I kept mistresses he would be their most devoted servant. He considers the Malet affair a great conspiracy with many ramifications, and would like to have many Jacobins, and even prominent figures, arrested. But I think Pasquier and Savary⁴ are right in judging that that audacious attempt was simply hatched in the minds of a few idiots. It was quite right not to arrest any prominent men, for rigorous action causes irritation. If there are any guilty parties at large they will not escape the police, and it would not do to have the Government betraying unwarranted suspicion. In the eyes of Europe, as of France, it is preferable that this conspiracy should appear as nothing more

¹ The 29th Bulletin, dated from Molodetchna, December 5rd, and sent direct from Smorgoni to Paris, appeared in the *Moniteur universel* of December 16, 1812.

² Since August 9, 1807, this Minister had been General Clarke.

³ Clarke, who came from an aristocratic Irish family, was the son of a subaltern quartermaster at Landrecies.

⁴ At that time Prefect and Minister of Police.

formidable than a madman's escapade. Savary anticipated my wishes perfectly by adopting this attitude."

On our arrival at Glogau that evening¹ the General in command was not a little surprised to discover that the Master of the Horse was none other than the Emperor himself. His Majesty went closely into the state of the place and the condition of the country, issued various orders, and barely took time to sup, so anxious was he to be on the way once more. We set off in the carriage offered by the General and accepted by the Emperor, who was very tired from being unable to lie at full length in the sledge.

Certain as I was that the snow would prevent us going far on wheels, I took the precaution of having our faithful sledge follow us; and it was as well that I did so, for being unable to proceed in the carriage at more than a walking pace, we had not left Glogau far behind when we transferred into our less comfortable conveyance. Half-frozen in this modest vehicle, which we should have done well not to leave, the Emperor was unable to sleep, and began to talk of the army, of which, owing to the rapidity of our movements, we could have no news. He longed to get into Saxony.² He did not like having to cross Prussian territory, and this led to the following conversation :

"If we are stopped, Caulaincourt, what will they do to us? Do you think I shall be recognized, that it will be known that I am here? You are popular enough in Germany, Caulaincourt, you speak the language; you protected the postmasters and took all my gendarmes to furnish them with escorts. They would never allow you to be arrested or ill-treated."

"I do not suppose they will have very grateful memories of a protection that did not hinder their being pillaged."

"Bah! They may have suffered for twenty-four hours,

¹ December 12th. "The fatigues of the road had so exhausted his travelling companions, who were already enfeebled by the privations experienced during the retreat, that while the Emperor was questioning the Governor of Glogau as to the condition of the fortress, Count Wonsowicz fell asleep as he sat at table and fell from his chair. The Emperor did not have him awakened until the moment of departure." (*Bourgoing, Itinéraire*, 66.)

² The travellers could not enter Saxony until just before Bautzen.

but you had their horses given back to them. Berthier never stopped talking of your claims on their behalf. Have you ever been in Silesia?"

"Only with Your Majesty."

"Then you are not known here?"

"No, Sire."

"I did not reach Glogau until after the gates had been closed for the night. Unless the General or the courier have been chattering in front of the postilion, it is impossible that anyone should know I am in Prussia."

"That is true; and no one would imagine that it was the Emperor travelling in this sorry vehicle. As to the Master of the Horse, he is not of sufficient importance for the Prussians to compromise themselves by arresting him. Your Majesty's journey has been so speedy that no one on the road so much as knows about it. Some sort of plan would have to be arranged before any attempt could be made on us; even a spiteful and determined man must get three or four kindred spirits to help him."

"If the Prussians were to stop us, what would they do to us?"

"If it was the result of a definite plan, not knowing what to do with us they would kill us. So we must defend ourselves to the utmost extremity. We may be lucky; there are four of us."

"But if they take you alive, what will they do to you, my good Duke of Vicenza?" said the Emperor jokingly.

"If they take me it will be because of my secretary, in which event I shall be in a bad way."

"If we are stopped," rejoined the Emperor briskly, "we shall be made prisoners of war, like Francis I. Prussia will get back the millions she has paid, and will ask for millions more."

"If they dared strike such a blow, Sire, we should not get off so cheaply as that."

"I think you are right. They fear me too much; they would want to keep me."

"That is highly probable."

"For fear I should escape, or lest some terrible reprisals might be undertaken, the Prussians would hand me over to the English."

"Possibly!"

"Can you picture to yourself, Caulaincourt, the figure you would cut in an iron cage, in the main square of London?"

"If it meant sharing your fate, Sire, I should not complain."

"It is not a question of complaining, but of something that may happen at any moment, and of the figure you would cut in that cage, shut up like a wretched negro left to be eaten by flies after being smeared with honey," rejoined the Emperor, with a laugh.

And there he was for quarter of an hour, laughing at this foolish notion, and the idea of that figure in the cage.

Never had I seen the Emperor laugh so heartily, and his gaiety was so infectious that it was some time before we could speak a word without finding some fresh source of amusement.

It was with considerable relief that the Emperor reflected that nothing could be known of his departure and that the Prussians, even if they did learn about it, would not dare take any action against him while their troops were in the midst of ours and we were as strong as they imagined us to be.

"But a secret assassination, an ambuscade, would be easy," said His Majesty, thus betraying his lively desire to be across this strip of Prussian territory, which gave him food for such serious as well as amusing reflections.

This thought so preoccupied him that he asked if our pistols were in good order, at the same time making sure his own was ready to hand. I had inspected them at Posen, so we firmly made up our minds to give a warm reception to the first person who interfered with us. Any inquisitive fellow who had thrust his head in at our door that night would have fared ill.

The change of relays interrupted our conversation. As the Emperor had not wished the courier for Glogau to be more than an hour ahead of us, and as he had travelled slower than we had, he was only a short distance in front, and the relay

horses were not ready. The Emperor could think of nothing but this delay. Accustomed to having everyone at his beck and call, he could not understand that it should take more than the half-hour by which the courier was in advance to have his horses ready. We were at a Prussian posting-house, and what I attributed to nothing but the habitual slowness of Prussian postmasters seemed to him intentional delay. I had satisfied myself as to the real causes of this delay, but had not succeeded in arousing the postmaster from his imperturbable nonchalance; nor had I been able to urge on the postilions who, according to their wont, harnessed their horses as slowly as possible so as to leave them time to feed. I spent my time going to and fro between the stables and the sledge where the Emperor sat, perished with cold. To while away the time he asked for some tea, which can be had at any posting-house in Germany. Two cups warmed him up a little, but they did not seem to allay his impatience, which increased every instant. He asked if our escort had followed us. Of the six gendarmes we had taken from Glogau only the two were left who sat at the back of the sledge, and they were half-perished with cold. At last, after waiting for an hour, we took the road again.

We passed one of the most painful nights on the whole journey. The change of vehicle had frozen us. For my own part, it was thirty-six hours before I was warm again.

"I thought," said the Emperor laughingly, as soon as we were on the move again, "that the curtain was rising on the first act of the Cage-play. How was it possible to take two hours to harness four horses, or even six—which were waiting in the stables."

But ill-fortune dogged our steps. Our sledge broke, and this made our progress slow. We reached Buntzlau,¹ where we had to stop to have it mended. We took advantage of this delay to have our breakfast. The Emperor chatted with the inn-keeper, a worthy German. I acted as interpreter. His Majesty asked him as to the state of the country, taxation, the

¹ On the Bober, in Silesia; the morning of December 13th. The whole of this account furnishes hitherto unknown details as to the Emperor's journey.

administration, and what they thought of the war. Taking us for simple travellers, the inn-keeper replied to all his questions with the utmost candour. The less his replies were made to please the Emperor, the more the latter plied him with questions, often observing to me with a smile:

"He is right: he has more common sense than many a man at the head of affairs. He isn't merely a courtier."

The kindness and sincerity of this inn-keeper delighted the Emperor. His place was taken by a seller of glass beads who forced her way into the Emperor's room. The confiding nature of this woman, who, not knowing in the least who we were, yet wanted to let us have the whole of her stock on trust, without receiving any money or even giving any indication of why she placed this confidence in us, amused him very much. He bought some necklaces, rings, etc., and said to me:

"I will take them to Marie Louise, as a souvenir of my journey. It is only fair, Caulaincourt, that we should divide them between us. You must give some to the lady of your heart. Never had man such a long *tête-à-tête* with his sovereign as you have had. This journey will be an historic memory for your family. The Emperor will never forget all the care you have devoted to him."

He was so good as to give me half of what he purchased, instructing me to pack up the other half for the Empress. He then threw himself on a hard bed, telling me to let him know as soon as the sledge was ready. While the Emperor rested I hurried forward the repairs to the sledge, and occupied myself with the continuation of my notes from the time we left Posen.

All the Emperor's remarks showed that his mind was continually occupied with the army, and that he persisted in believing that it could be rallied at Wilna. His opinion did not change. He made all his arrangements and based all his plans on this presumption.

"The bad effect of our disasters will be balanced in Europe by my return to Paris," he said.

The consolation afforded by reflections such as these made

our journey a happy one. The nearer we got to France, where all his hopes were centred, the less did the Emperor seem preoccupied and careworn.

"Schwarzenberg is a man of honour," he said. "He will keep his corps in readiness. He has no wish to become a traitor the first moment that Fortune turns her back on us. The Prussians will model their conduct on that of the Austrians. I shall be at the Tuileries before anyone knows of my disaster or dares to betray me. My cohorts make an army of more than a hundred thousand men, well-disciplined soldiers led by war-trained officers. I have the money and arms to form excellent cadres, and before three months have passed I shall have conscripts and five hundred thousand men under arms on the banks of the Rhine. The cavalry will take the longest to collect and form, but I have the wherewithal to do everything in the coffers of the Tuileries."

Our conversation turned on many other matters, notably on his family, his army service, the Directory, his negotiations, the departure for Egypt, his return, his ideas and projects in Egypt and on his return to France. To avoid the repetitions which inevitably resulted from my daily jottings, for the Emperor reverted on more than one occasion to some of the subjects under discussion, I shall here make a summary of the most striking points in our conversations:

The Emperor was the son of Charles Bonaparte and Letizia Ramolino. His family was of Tuscan origin, his ancestors being inscribed in the Golden Book of the first families of Bologna.¹ His father was of a junior branch that established itself in Corsica in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.² He was chosen deputy representing the Corsican nobility, and

¹ The question of the origin of the Bonaparte family has been obscured by flattery. In 1859 a report by the Minister of Public Instruction, quoted by M. de Brotonne in *Les Bonapartes et leurs alliances*, p. 2, states that the name had been borne by several families whose common origin it would be in vain to attempt to prove. Nevertheless Federico Stefani, in *La antichità dei Bonaparte, con uno studio storico sulla marca transigiana*, has succeeded in tracing the Treviso branch back to the twelfth century. It was from that branch that the Sarzana family sprang, and their existence is proved in 1215. This Sarzana family was the stock from which came the Corsican Bonapartes.

² The family was established in Corsica at the beginning of the sixteenth century by Francis, who died at Ajaccio in 1554.

died at Montpellier in 1785.¹ The Emperor was one of the most promising cadets at the military school of Brienne, and on this account was transferred to that of Paris and thence to the Grenoble regiment of artillery.² His great-uncle Lucien, archdeacon of Ajaccio, was a father to him, and died in 1791 at a very great age.³ The Emperor was an ardent partisan of Paoli until he realized that the General was betraying France to England. Paoli liked him very much. It was for the same reason that Napoleon broke with Pozzo di Borgo who was implicated in Paoli's intrigue.

Employed in the Army of Italy, Napoleon was sent to the siege of Toulon, where, supported by the Representative Gasparin⁴ as well as by General Dugommier, he directed the attacks against that town which ended in its capture, despite the ineptitude that Carteaux⁵ had shown in the undertaking. After this he was employed in the Army of Italy under General Dumerbion,⁶ but was put on the retired list by Aubry.⁷ By the influence of Barras he was again employed on active service in the Affair of the Sections of Paris.⁸ Appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Interior, in 1796⁹ he married Madame de Beauharnais and went to replace Schérer in the Army of Italy. The events of that glorious campaign are well known. He defeated three Austrian

¹ February 24, 1785. In 1777 he was deputy of the nobility at the Corsican State Assembly.

² This is a mistake. On leaving the military school Napoleon was gazetted to the La Fère regiment, and was in garrison, first at Valence and then at Auxonne.

³ Archdeacon Lucien, brother of Napoleon's grandfather, was born at Ajaccio, January 8, 1718, and died at the same place, October 15, 1791.

⁴ Thomas Augustin de Gasparin (born Orange, February 27, 1754—died Orange, November 11, 1793), was deputy for Bouches-du-Rhône to the Legislative Assembly and the Convention, was a member of the Committee of Public Safety, in mission at Toulon, and the only representative of the people to support the plan of attack presented by young Bonaparte.

⁵ By an order dated October 21, 1793, Carteaux handed over the command of the army operating against Toulon to General Doppet who, in his turn, passed it to General Dugommier on November 16th.

⁶ January 1794.

⁷ After the 9th Thermidor, Aubry, deputy of the Gard, replaced Carnot on the Committee of Public Safety, for military reasons. It was he who retired Napoleon in May 1795.

⁸ Vendémiaire, year IV.

⁹ March 9th.

armies, drove them from the shores of the Mediterranean back to Carinthia, where he dictated peace, it might almost be said in spite of the Directory, and gave the first example of moderation in his terms since the Republic had been declared. At Tolentino he showed himself equally generous to the Pope, at the risk of compromising himself with the Directory, which was entirely opposed to moderation towards the Head of the Church. He acted in the same spirit towards the Austrians at Campo Formio; and he created the Cisalpine Republic in order to deprive Austria of Lombardy.

M. de Merveldt,¹ one of the Austrian plenipotentiaries, tried to seduce him into the service of that country, or at least to draw him away from France in the hopes that he would eventually find himself forced into the arms of Austria. At Leoben, one day, he suggested that Napoleon's position and the victories he had won would necessarily place him at the head of affairs in France and Italy. Napoleon admitted that the possibility of this was only hindered by the unrest and jealousy that were inherent in a government such as that which held power in France, adding that in his opinion this was only an experiment in government. Perceiving from these opinions the direction in which his mind was turning, M. de Merveldt hinted, after a time, that Austria might recognize his merits by giving him a principality in Germany. Napoleon appeared flattered at such a proposal, a form of homage rendered to the talents ascribed to him, but he rejected it as an act of treachery to France against whom he might, in the event of accepting, be called upon to take part in case of war. Suspected by Austria, and faithless to the interests of his own country, this was a part in no way suitable to his character.

"It was to this same M. de Merveldt," said the Emperor, "that I remarked at the outset of these discussions: '*Sir, the French Republic is like the noonday sun; woe to them who see it not!*'"² This answer, uttered at the very first suggestion

¹ Count Maximilian de Merveldt and MM. de Bellegarde and Gallo, were the peace negotiators at Leoben.

² Cf. A. Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, V, 155.

of recognizing the French Republic in the name of his master, disconcerted the Austrian plenipotentiary. In offering recognition he thought he was offering something on which the French government would set great store. My answer, which gave him an idea of my own character and of the esteem in which I held the dignity and might of France, made him more circumspect. From that moment the Austrian plenipotentiaries dropped all the foolish proposals that they would otherwise have put forward. By the time the negotiations were concluded I had inspired them with the utmost confidence. They found my ideas of moderation and of settling the affairs of Europe were different from those hitherto professed by the Committee of Public Safety and the Directory. To negotiate terms," the Emperor continued, "I had to be politic with the Directory, and in the end I was obliged to conclude peace in spite of it."

In the course of this conversation the Emperor asked me whether M. de Merveldt¹ had narrated these facts to me when I had had dealings with him.

"He was a very clever man," he said, "extremely shrewd and well fitted to conduct delicate negotiations. His only fault was that he was altogether too cunning, and consequently made his adversaries distrust him from the very outset. He was better as a diplomat than as a General, though as courageous as he was clever."

The Emperor, who was almost as much in the vein for talking as I was for listening, went on speaking of his Italian campaign and the conduct of the Directory. That campaign and the negotiations of Leoben and Campo Formio developed his political principles. It was from that time that he felt himself destined for a great career. Before then his thoughts had been turned only in the direction of war. His outlook now became profound and extensive. He saw Europe and the interests of France in a very different light from that in which he had hitherto looked on them, and in which the Directory and the men at the head of affairs still regarded

¹ Count de Merveldt was Austrian Ambassador at Petersburg when Caulaincourt represented France at the Russian Court.

them. He felt that there were great things for him to accomplish, although he maintained a reserve that was necessitated by the suspicions and narrow-minded attitude of the Directors, as well as by the opinions that still governed the Generals and the army.

In his conversations with the most prominent Italians, notably with M. Melzi,¹ the Emperor perceived that he astonished them by the breadth of his views and his ability to take in everything at a glance. The realization of this, while giving him an estimate of his own worth, rendered him all the more circumspect. Obligated as he then was to expose himself frequently to danger, he acquired a fatalism of outlook that subsequently became natural to him. His appointment as representative at the Congress of Rastadt proved clearly that the Directory desired nothing but to keep him at a distance.² Realizing that it would be as awkward for those in Paris to have him there as it would be for him to be there, he turned his mind to devising some way of extricating himself from this difficult position. The Directory lacked the means to embark on the expedition against England which had been considered. That would, moreover, have put him at the head of an army in France, and it was alarming enough to have him at the head of one in Italy. So it was decided to send an expedition to Egypt. The Emperor would have preferred to remain in France as a private individual, but he soon realized the impossibility of following such a course. It would have been foolish and impolitic to repulse the men who wished to be friendly with him, yet it gave umbrage when he received them. His victories, which had secured the stability of the Directory, were already the cause of his being looked upon askance. However much the government might have failed, it seemed to offer some state of tranquillity to the French, who were tired of revolutions.

¹ François Melzi d'Eril (1753-1816) had been appointed by Napoleon as envoy from the Cisalpine Republic to the Congress of Rastadt. In 1802 he was Vice-President of the Italian Republic, in 1805 Chancellor and Keeper of the Seals to the Kingdom of Italy. In 1807 he was made Duke of Lodi.

² Bonaparte stayed at Rastadt from November 25 to December 2, 1797, in order to exchange ratifications of the Treaty of Campo Formio.

"Nations, like individuals," said the Emperor, "learn only by their own experience, more often than not by misfortune. Revolutions and successive changes have never given foresight to anyone. Desiring neither to lend my support, nor to fortify with my acquiescence and advice a Directory devoid of any idea that was noble, generous or national in sentiment, composed of men guided solely by self-interest, whose weakness and ineptitude rendered them defiant, I was confirmed in the opinion that the best course I could pursue would be to place myself at a distance from it. Reubell, the outstanding figure in the Directory, should have made merely a worthy mayor. Barras was a schemer solely occupied in making his own fortune, having extremely suspect relations with outsiders and perfectly disposed to sell himself to anyone, even to the Bourbons, for it was they who could give him the most money and the best places."

In the course of conversation one day Barras gave the Emperor an inkling of his plans, and from that moment Napoleon avoided his confidences as far as possible, not wishing to be his accomplice. He thereupon decided to go to Egypt. England was deceived as to the object of this much-talked-of campaign, for which such vast preparations were made.

"So true is it," remarked the Emperor, from his experience of many similar occasions, "that the cleverness of the best observers always reaches beyond what is apparent to the eye. They invariably credit others with more than the obvious, more than common sense warrants."

The more it was clear from the preparations and details of the expedition that it was intended for Egypt, the less was it believed that Egypt was its real destination. It was even more successful than could have been hoped, for by unheard-of good luck Napoleon had time to seize Malta.¹ It was this circumstance that first made him believe in what he called his Star. Thenceforward he felt that his plans and undertakings were shared by Providence. The disaster which befell the fleet ² soon after his landing in Egypt, although a very serious

¹ June 12, 1798.

² The destruction of Brueys' fleet by Nelson at Aboukir Bay, August 1, 1798.

misfortune, appeared to him in the light of another proof of the influence of his Star. This idea never left him, and inspired him with confidence, even with an undefinable superstition, for, although not an atheist, Napoleon was not religious.

Talleyrand was to have gone to Constantinople to explain and settle matters with the Porte, simultaneously with the sailing of the fleet for Egypt.¹ But when Napoleon learned that he had not gone, and perceived that he himself was to be left to carry out his task unaided, in spite of what had been agreed upon with the Directory, he was more than discontented, especially when he heard that the Porte was making preparations for war; for this would upset all his plans. Talleyrand, who preferred intriguing in Paris to spending some years in the Seven Towers,² was disconcerted when he saw Napoleon back from Egypt, but he attributed this change of policy to the Directory, who had need of his services and were, moreover, little inclined to facilitate Napoleon's undertaking in Egypt. In addition to all this, experience of the Turks had proved that the mission to Constantinople would have met with little success, for the Turks have very little idea of politics. Nothing would have convinced the Divan that the expedition was anything but an invasion of Egypt by the infidels.

Passing from this to what might have resulted from the expedition, the Emperor added that if the Porte had but understood better where its interests lay, or if the artillery for the siege of Acre had not been captured by the English,³ events of great importance would have taken place, either in the Near East or in India, where he would have destroyed the power of England. As master of Acre he would have been able to carry out one or other of these projects, for the entire

¹ Cf. Lacour-Gayet, *Talleyrand*, I, 317, and Karl Ludwig Lorke, *Pourquoi Talleyrand ne fut pas envoyé à Constantinople*, in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution*, I, March-April, 1933.

² A fortress at Stamboul, of which one of the towers, called The Ambassador's Tower, was habitually used as a prison for such foreign diplomats as had given the Sultan displeasure. Ruffin was kept there for three years, from 1798 to 1801.

³ These guns, forming the siege park, were being taken from Alexandria by sea when they were captured by Sidney Smith.

Christian population would have sided with him, and with their aid he would have been able to do great things. The French troops would then have been simply the reserve. There would have been no need for caution so far as the Turks were concerned, as they were merely barbarians for whom treaties had no significance, even when their government wished to observe them. That nation knew nothing of authority, law or order, except as the abuse of power. As an example of this he cited the conduct of the garrison of El-Arisch,¹ who were foolishly allowed to go free on parole and whom he subsequently found at Jaffa, where their presence made the capture of the place a more costly undertaking, especially as the army was then suffering from the plague. He was obliged to shoot some of those same Turks whom the soldiers, wearied of slaughter, had spared in the assault of the town; for he was able neither to feed them nor take them away, nor send them under escort, and he could not again leave them in his rear, with the possibility of finding them a third time opposed to him, and even the chance of seeing them seize Egypt in his absence.

I omit the familiar details of the Egyptian campaign. General Bonaparte returned to France because the failure at Acre reduced the Egyptian expeditionary force to the condition of an isolated colony if no reinforcements were sent out. The army was in a position to resist the Turks, and even the English if they should make a landing. He left it in a good state, and time proved that he had not been mistaken. We should still have been there if Kléber had lived, if Menou had been a better soldier, and if his Generals had been less quarrelsome and had acted more in harmony under a chief who did not override them. This being the case, General Bonaparte's presence in Egypt was unnecessary. By returning to France he was able to put in order certain affairs that had been neglected by the Directory, which was too much taken up by its difficult and internal dissensions to pay attention to Egypt. These matters having been put right, the army of Egypt might have been reinforced and enabled to fulfil its splendid

¹ The fort of El-Arisch was taken on February 20, 1799.

destiny, even to have furnished us with pledges to bargain for peace, when that should become possible. The Directory has been credited with having had the intention of arresting General Bonaparte. Undoubtedly each of the Directors had this thought in mind, but not one of them mentioned it to his neighbour. The Directory was too feeble, too embarrassed, too full of distrust, too divided against itself to have been able to execute such a step. The reverses our armies had suffered made Napoleon appear in the light of a saviour. Public opinion was for him. The Directory as a whole and each Director in particular wanted to have him on his side and gain his support. Only Moreau counteracted his influence, and that but feebly.

Sieyès had the greatest share in the decision and execution of 18th Brumaire. General Bonaparte had not been deceived by Barras.¹ A chance word let slip by this Director and the indiscretion of a man who thought he was serving the Bourbon cause had laid bare all the intrigues that Bonaparte long suspected. This furnished him with proof that Barras had sold himself to the Restoration party.² Everything that transpired demonstrated clearly the truth of what he had suspected, namely that a revolution was imminent and inevitable. This decided him. Having attained power, he strove to rally all parties, to consolidate all interests, to put an end to civil war. It was to achieve this aim that he tried to make peace with England, though he was unable to accomplish it at first. He perceived that the pacification of the West was a necessary

¹ Cf. Gourgaud, *Sainte-Hélène*, I, 468: "Soon after my return from Egypt," said Napoleon, "he [Barras] invited me to dinner with him in private. . . . In the middle of the meal Barras said: 'The Republic is going badly. . . . The Republic is in such a bad way that only a President can save it, and General Hedouville is the only man I can see as suitable for the task. What do you think?' I answered in a tone that made him see I was not to be taken in by him." The following day Barras went to see Bonaparte. "He tried once more," said the latter, "to get me on his side, saying, 'You see, I will be whatever you decide, white if you wish, black if that is your desire.' "

² It was in Thermidor, year VII (July–August 1799) that Barras entered into relations with the Bourbons through the medium of Fauche-Borel. In the event of success he had been promised ten million *livres tournois* (an old coin worth about 10d.). It is true that in his *Mémoires* Barras pretends that all these manoeuvres took place with the knowledge and assent of his colleagues in the Directory.

preliminary to secure this result, and he devoted all his attention to attaining it.

The Emperor returned to the subject of the Bourbons "who" he said, "had no longer any partisans in France. Theirs was a lost cause. But they still have agents, even among prominent officials, and this is convenient for me, as these men serve both parties and keep me informed of what is going on, of what the Princes are planning in England, and of what certain schemers are devising in France. These persons find it to their advantage not to deceive me, and dare not do so since they depend on me for their places. In my turn I use them to make known what I want to be known ; and this has been of service to me on more than one occasion."

The Emperor gave as an example the Arch-Treasurer Le Brun¹ and M. Becquey,² enjoining me to keep my own counsel. Only two persons knew this secret. The slightest indiscretion might deprive him of the services they rendered him. He added that they wrote nothing without showing it to him, and that, having persons in his pay in the intimate circles of the Princes in England, he was able, by comparing the reports of one and the other, to make certain that he was not being deceived and to assure himself that the Count of Artois was not spying on him in Paris as he was spying on the Count in England.

According to the Emperor, the Duke of Piacenza (Le Brun), who had rendered great services at the time of the Consulate, had never accepted any appointment, not even the Consulate on the 10th Brumaire, without the advice and acquiescence of

¹ The Duke of Piacenza, former Consul.

² François Louis Becquey, born at Vitry-le-François, September 24, 1760, died at Paris, May 2, 1849. When he was deputy of the Haute Marne at the Legislative Assembly he sat on a secret committee appointed by the Directory to bring about the return of Louis XVIII—a committee that was not dissolved until long after Brumaire. In 1810, Napoleon appointed Becquey Counsellor of the University, and after 8th Frimaire, year XII, he was deputy to the Legislative Body. Director-General of Agriculture and Commerce in the First Restoration, he was Under-Secretary of State for the Interior, then Director of Roads and Bridges in the Second Restoration. The reports of the committee of which Becquey was a member, and which, according to Caulaincourt, were known to Napoleon, have been published by Remacle, *Relations secrètes des agents de Louis XVIII à Paris sous le Consulat*.

the Princes. Napoleon had not to wait long before proof of this was furnished by a very simple circumstance which had revealed to him the existence of these secret agents. Instead of making a commotion he at once conceived the project of using them, and this was more successful than he ever hoped. It was by this means that he was able to unravel other intrigues, and eventually to put an end to the civil war which rent the country. According to him, Le Brun was naturally two-faced, cunning, disobliging, hard and devoid of feeling, devoured by ambition.¹ Although he had an outward appearance of kindness and honesty, no one possessed less of these qualities than he did; but he had given the First Consul excellent advice. He had directed Napoleon in the choice of men, and his experience had often proved useful.

The farther we went, the more snow we found. The gales that had been blowing continuously for some days had caused such drifts in several places that the difficulties of the road made our progress too slow even for the liking of our phlegmatic Saxon postilions and horses.

The Emperor often spoke of the effect that would be produced by his return.

"The nation needs me," he said. "If it responds to my attentions all will soon be put right."

The news from Paris did not make him forget the army. He was more certain than ever that it would hold Wilna, and based all his calculations on this hypothesis. For my part, I reckoned aloud the days it would occupy in its retreat, as far as the Vistula at least, without arousing the Emperor's annoyance.

"You see the black side of everything; you are not encouraging," was his remark.

¹ General de Ségur did not share this opinion. "The Second Consul (Le Brun)," said he, comparing Cambacérés with Le Brun, "up to that time more remarkable than remarked, had a noble exterior, full of dignity. He was that rare thing, at once a man of State, a man of letters, and a financier, unostentatiously working for the general good, leaving his good deeds to speak for him, and his best works to survive him unasccribed. Bonaparte recognized his merit beneath the gentleness of his character, his calmness, and his retiring simplicity." (Ségur, *Histoire et Mémoires*, II, 14.) Cf. Marquis de Caumont La Force, *L'Architrésorier Le Brun, gouverneur de la Hollande*, 549.

What I had observed in the Duchy of Poland left me with no doubts as to the abandonment of Wilna.

"If there are no Polish Cossacks there can be no rest for your army," I said to the Emperor, who agreed that this shortage of cavalry somewhat changed the situation.

He would not, however, admit of the necessity for evacuating Wilna. He enumerated his forces, from the Prince of Schwarzenberg's corps to that of the Duke of Taranto, and was no doubt justified in thinking that numerically he had more men than were necessary to stop the Russians, provided that every one of them had done his duty. He thought that the sense of discouragement in the army had been allayed as soon as they got into touch with the stores at Wilna, and tried to persuade himself that the levies were already raised, or at least were being collected while we were on our way to Paris. To hear him, one might have imagined that no more need be done than march them from the barracks to the frontier. Not admitting the need for the evacuation of Lithuania, he equally refused to admit the existence of those almost insurmountable obstacles which the near approach of the enemy and the fear of invasion would place in the way of raising the levies.

Thus the Emperor journeyed on towards his capital, cherishing illusions such as these and in no way put out with me for not sharing in them. As was natural, our conversation continually reverted to the army, to politics, to the administration, to men we knew, to various institutions, to what he would do to better these, and to his son. He asked me to look about me for a tutor. He passed in review nearly all the men in official positions or at Court, even those of little prominence. The way he spoke of several confirmed me more than ever that, in general, he had but a poor opinion of mankind. It seems to me that this explains the absence of any animosity towards various persons who had done him real injury; he had every reason to heap reproaches on them, but he contented himself with dismissing them at once and not saying a word. He seemed to place great value on the delicacy of mind and honourable sentiments inculcated by good training in early years.

"It corrects the most vicious traits in a man's character," I have heard him say more than once. "The man who has not been well brought up has a certain uncouthness, a basis of egotism that makes it difficult to rely upon him. Self-interest is his only criterion. He lacks a sense of restraint, and this makes him liable to do anything."

He mentioned several notable men whom he employed in very responsible situations, adding that he did not trust them, that they were capable of betraying him at the first opportunity when they considered it in their interest to do so, although they owed everything to him. According to the Emperor, the binding nature of an oath, fidelity in the execution of the functions or service in which one is employed, the sense of honour that makes it impossible to betray the man one serves, meant nothing to these men: religion and fidelity were sentiments wholly lacking in their constitution.

"Even patriotism," he went on, "is a word that conveys nothing to them if it is not consonant with their own interests."

He added: "When certain people meet with the slightest disappointment, such as the refusal of a post they have requested for some rascal who happens to be a relation, they turn against me; some are even ready to plot against me if I put a stop to their peculations and open pillage."

In this connection the Emperor mentioned certain names so prominent that I dare not commit them to writing. I have no wish to tarnish the glory of these names, which will go down to history.

"But these men," the Emperor added, "are none the less heroes."

He concluded these reflections by observing that some people were wrong in complaining that he did not fill up all the appointments in his gift. Not wishing to exclude any who might claim their eminent services, he preferred to leave the whole question to be solved in time, which would settle many things. "By then," he said, "the children will be well educated and will make their start in life at a period of peace and calm; they will not have to make their fortunes, and I will give them the recompense earned by the good services of their fathers."

This conversation led the Emperor to speak of the different events of his life. It was with pleasure that he recalled some of the incidents of his youthful days, his success at the military academy, and his family, which had met with so little favour from fortune, though of a distinguished rank in Corsica. He spoke of various affairs of gallantry, of the preference which some society women had shown him above that granted to comrades who were at that time more conspicuous than himself.

"The reading of history," he said, "very soon made me feel that I was capable of achieving as much as the men who are placed in the highest ranks of our annals, though I had no goal before me, and though my hopes went no farther than my promotion to General. All my attention was fixed upon the great art of warfare, and on increasing my knowledge of that branch in which I believed my destiny to lie. I was not long in discovering that the knowledge that I set myself out to acquire and which I had hitherto regarded as the end I needed to attain was very far short of the distance to which my abilities might carry me. So I redoubled my application; what seemed to present difficulty to others to me appeared to be simple."

Of a serious nature, and inspired with a thoughtful turn of mind by love of his profession, the Emperor sought in every direction for knowledge, and for the development of the ideas and views germinating in his head, principally by conversing with those of his senior officers and comrades in whom he had remarked some superiority of intellect. The Revolution marched forward with giant strides; its ideas began to seethe in his young head as in many others. The corps in which he served was, by its composition and instructional training, peculiarly susceptible to new impressions and notions. Napoleon watched the progress of the Revolution with enthusiasm, though he condemned not only its excesses, but also its mistakes, with more severity than one would have expected from his age. Although he was without any experience himself, the conduct of the Court seemed to him ill-chosen, false and, above all, weak. He was no Republican; he wanted a constitutional monarchy; he would have defended the King

if the King had wished to be defended, although Louis and his Court did not appear to be acting in good faith. Like so many ardent royalists, Napoleon wished to have the way of promotion opened to merit, to have advancement possible without distinction of class, without the necessity of being the relation or friend of someone in high places or of invoking the patronage of a lady entitled to demand favours. He was quite unable to understand how the Princes of the Blood and the nobility could take refuge outside France while abandoning the King to danger. He was disgusted by the *émigrés* who wandered about Europe exhibiting their incapacity and immorality, instead of putting themselves at the head of a party in France or forming one that would rally the waverers to their side.

The Emperor would have ranged himself on the side of the *émigrés*, he said, if they had raised their standard in France and chosen prudent leaders to unite the ranks.

"The French," he went on, "never forgive cowardice, and it is cowardice to fly from danger and go to foreigners begging them for help against their country when they have such a noble cause to fight for at home. One should never wash dirty linen in public."

He had always been sorry for the King. All his concern was for him; he would have liked to have been able to defend him when his life was threatened.

"His death," said the Emperor, "seemed to me a disgrace to the nation, though, so far as that goes, the nation was innocent of the crime, for it was Coblenz that killed him. As for the King's judges," he went on, "with many of them it was fear rather than hatred or spite that inspired their sentence. What I have already done at Saint-Denis,¹ and what I count upon doing at the Madeleine, will prove that I have always considered his death a crime, and that I thought so before I became a sovereign myself. Since I have worn a crown I have shown clearly enough that I mean to close the doors against

¹ Napoleon had undertaken the restoration of the Basilica in 1805. After the violation of the royal tombs during the Revolution the church, robbed of lead on its roof, had served as a storehouse for wheat and flour.

revolution. The sovereigns of Europe are indebted to me for stemming the torrent of revolutionary spirit that threatened their thrones; but to prevent the evil breaking out again it is useless to rake up the memory of wrongs done at a time of general upheaval. People must be induced to forget, or remember only in order to prevent a recurrence. I am far from being an advocate of the Convention, but if anyone is to be called to account for the evils done at that time, it is not the men of the Convention, who were carried away by the frenzy of the time, but the Revolution which had been brought about by the Court itself. As a matter of strict justice the reckoning for our past misfortune should be laid to the Princes and men of the Court who caused the Revolution. The Montmorencies, the Lameths, the Aiguillons, the Talleyrands, the Lafayettes, the Rochefoucaulds, Monsieur (the King's brother), and many others were the real malefactors.

"These men," he went on, "ought to have laid down their lives on the steps of the throne instead of attacking it. Speaking generally, the nobility ought to have fought to the death instead of saving themselves by flight abroad, which was nothing but a convenient way of escaping danger by professing a false devotion. As for the others, those called revolutionaries, they belonged to a lower class which naturally wanted to raise itself. They looked after themselves, and circumstances proved stronger than they were. Those who carried on intrigues abroad did more to bring about the death of the King than the Convention. To be perfectly just, it is impossible to say who is to blame for that death which is now known as the Cause of Sovereigns. The two million individuals who clamoured for it in the addresses they sent up to the Convention were more guilty than many of those who were frightened into voting for it by the knives of the Paris Jacobins. My government has always acted on the principle that what happened prior to its establishment did not take place, always making an exception of services rendered. That is the principle to adopt in order to avert reaction, to quench all hatred and stifle revenge. The greatest seigneurs of the old regime, the leaders of the Emigration, those whose families have perished by the axe of the

Revolution, dine with the Duke of Otranto and even have relations with him and Merlin,¹ not to speak of other revolutionaries. My government has brought about this fusion. Incomplete though they are, the institutions guarantee the existing state of affairs and are made for the benefit of the sovereign as much as of the people.

"I am designing a monument, however, which, without wounding the living, will honour the names of the dead, and will keep alive in the minds of our children sufficient memories of the unhappy times we have passed through, so that they shall know not to kill kings and that monarchs are not to be buried like private individuals."

The Emperor then asked me if I shared the general opinion that the Madeleine² was meant for a temple of Glory.

"You are the first," he told me, "to know all my ideas for this scheme. I have raised too many monuments to the immortal glory of the French for there to be any need thus to consecrate the Madeleine. I am not a pagan monarch. I have given enough proof of that, for none of the Kings of France, not even the most pious of them, did as much for religion as I have done. The re-establishment of the Church is due to me; only power and a will like mine could have brought this about. Although I am not always in political agreement with the Pope, I venerate him from a religious point of view. I respect his character. I have great projects. Give me a year of peace and the development of my plans will amaze [*gap in original MS.*] like upstarts who date everything from their own time and dislike to hear their predecessors mentioned. I will contrast the glory of ancient with that of modern France, her old civilization with her new, the sciences and arts in which she had so long led the way in Europe with her present-day marvels; in fact, I will contrast her Kings with her Emperor. All illustrious men, of all ranks, of all conditions and all ages,

¹ Merlin de Douai who, like Fouché, had voted for the death of the King, was at that time Procurator-General at the Court of Cassation.

² It was in 1806 that Napoleon decided to erect the monument on the site of a church which had been started, demolished, started again and left unfinished. The design of the new structure was committed to Vignon. The big columns were raised so far as the astragals in 1815.

belong to this fair France. They must mingle and speak to our children, calling forth their admiration as much as that of the rest of the world. I want no idols made of me, nor even any outdoor statues. It was to my great disgust, and without consulting me, that Denon had my statue made for the column in the Place Vendôme.¹ Indeed, it is very likely that I shall change this arrangement, although the publicity already given to the plan may make it inconvenient to make any alterations. They can do what they like after I am dead. If France attains to the summit of glory and prosperity that I design for her, they shall decree a statue in my honour, if they so desire. If I succumb in the carrying out of my enterprises, it is better that there should be nothing to expose to the criticism of the world. I want no homage in the form of flattery, nor, as happened to Louis XV, a statue that shall be exposed to public ridicule.² A nation, like history itself, rarely takes reckoning of anything but success."

The Emperor went on to say it would be impossible to raise a temple of Glory in a Christian country. Having achieved more than all the other generals or statesmen, and being Emperor, people would not be slow to say, and perhaps with some degree of justification, that he had raised a fane in his own honour, that he was the real object of worship within it, under the conventional name of Glory. He repeated his words that glory was the heritage of all Frenchmen, that he would immortalize its memories in every monument, every establishment of public utility which he had created or was yet to create. It was upon reminders such as these that he rested his imperishable fame. Had he announced, in advance, the project of raising an expiatory monument to all the victims of the Revolution, especially to the most distinguished, he would have awakened unhappy memories and given offence to many men who, when the Revolution was finished, rendered eminent

¹ Napoleon was furiously angry when it was projected to place his statue on the triumphal arch in the Carrousel. Cf. Lanza de Larorie, *Paris sous Napoléon, II, Administration, grands travaux*, 182.

² It has been said about the equestrian statue of Louis XV, with its pedestal adorned with female figures representing the cardinal virtues, "The Virtues go on foot, Vice on horseback."

services to France and to whom—it ought never to be forgotten—France owed the honour and glory of having resisted the power of all Europe. Her legal codes and her good administration were partly their work.

“It is to the energy shown by several of these men that France owes the conclusion of the Reign of Terror,” he said. “By hurting the feelings of some of these men I should likewise wound the self-respect of their families and connections. Ultimately this would wound the susceptibility of the nation. Time brings things to pass imperceptibly; the great art is to act opportunely. As the monument of the Madeleine will take some years to complete, I have time to make such preparations as shall ensure that its inauguration will fulfil my purpose without giving offence to anyone. From now onwards we shall enjoy peace. Our internal situation thus permitting of my completing our institutions, the great changes that I plan and that I shall then put into execution will distract public attention. The Senate will become a House of Peers, but in a truly national spirit. All things being so bound up together and simultaneously intermingled, no one will feel that his sensibilities have been wounded.”

The Emperor envisaged the peerage in the following manner. He had drawn the families of the old aristocracy into his service so that names that were famous in history, appearing side by side in our ranks with those associated with our modern glory—taking the same chances with them and encountering the same dangers—should no longer be objects of jealousy with the old campaigners. His purpose had been to identify the youth of the old families with the glory and great deeds of modern days and thus bind the new and old names in a personal pride in the most recent events. He wished to place them in such a situation that he might with justice mend the fortunes of several who had fallen on hard times.

It was contrary to his wishes for a Montmorency to be poor when Ney was rich. It was not right that the nephew of Cambacérès, if he should come into the title and fortune of his uncle, should splash an Aguesseau or a Molé with the mud from his carriage wheels. Nor did he want the Gazans,

Labordes, Durosnels, Corbineaus, Gérards, Foy, Lamarques, Clauzels to be worse off than the foremost of our military families. Gaudin and Mollien belonged to France and her history as much as the Colberts and Louvois. In itself the peerage was nothing; to many it would be simply the shameful supremacy of a few if it did not offer the nation some considerable guarantee in exchange for its privileges. For this reason it must be hereditary. It was according to his intention to make it hereditary, in most cases, unless death removed certain members of the Senate who could not expect hereditary honours, and whose grant of such would upset his plans.

But time was necessary for him to make the fortunes of those who had a right to a peerage and were not wealthy enough to keep up the position. He spoke of men of the old stamp and of the new stamp. All the notabilities would be admitted to the peerage. It was for this purpose that he would retain his "extraordinary domain"¹ and devote the annual revenue from it to increase the capital: for he did not intend this Chamber of Peers to be a charge on the State. The peerage would carry no privileges outside the Chamber nor would noble rank give any, the social distinction being nothing but a question of title and thus in no way offending national ideas. The law must be the same for all. Otherwise the idea of a peerage would so shock public opinion that it would rather bring down on its recipients a torrent of public hatred than confer on them the distinction of holding a title. The door of promotion to all posts and functions being open to merit, no matter what a man's extraction or condition of life, the nation would be less offended by his creation of titles. There could be no question of the need for instituting this distinction, yet no act of his had made him more enemies.

As the career lay open for any soldier to become a general, a baron, a duke and then a marshal; or for the son of any peasant, schoolmaster, lawyer or local mayor to become coun-

¹ The "extraordinary domain," created by the *Senatus-Consultum* of January 30, 1810, consisted of the portable and fixed valuables acquired by conquest and treaty. The Emperor disposed of the revenues according to his sovereign will, either on the Army, or for the encouragement and reward of eminent civil or military services rendered to the State.

cillor of state, minister and duke, this peerage would, in time, cease to offend any susceptibilities, as it would afford a means of rewarding everyone, without distinction.

It was his intention to summon to the peerage all the leading notables, so that the French people, whom he had been the first to proclaim as a great nation, should feel itself honoured in the selection of its most distinguished men, who would, moreover, have sufficient means to be independent; for those who are governed have no guarantee of safety if their representatives lack the first element of independence, especially in a country like France where property must necessarily be the first condition for any form of eminence.

He went on to say that many people thought him violent and despotic because he had an adamant will; yet at the Council of State, when the Code was being discussed, he had been the most moderate of all those present. It was to him that France owed the Code which would be her eternal glory, the envy of all other peoples and the object of admiration to posterity. He might have let things remain in the chaos in which they had been left by the old regime and made worse by the Revolution, and ruled the country as he pleased. As it was, no one could deny that France was governed by law.

"That is sufficient answer to make," he said, "to those who construe my firmness of will as despotism."

The Emperor cited several examples of officials and magistrates being dismissed and censured for having been drawn into taking measures or making arbitrary decisions through a mistaken zeal or ill-considered notions of government. He said once again that his principle of government, his own tendency and that of his Council of State, was to uphold, so far as justice allowed, the weak against the strong, and, as a corollary of this, the private individual against the authorities, who, having power on their side, were prone to encroach and carry off things with a high hand. As a broad principle, to his Ministers he insisted on the necessity of being vigilant, that the authorities should prevent evil rather than be obliged to punish it. The people who observed, and were in a position to judge,

his government realized perfectly well that the repute in which his strength of will was held served him more than his reputation for severity.

"Everything goes to prove this," he went on. "It is said that I love power. Well, has anyone, in any department, cause for complaint? Never have the prisons been so empty. Does anyone complain of a prefect without obtaining justice? Forty-five out of every fifty complaints are decided against the prefects. The government is strong, my hand is steady, and the officials are sensible that I shall not slacken the reins. So much the better for the people, for while this system traces out a definite path for each to follow, my watchfulness inspires the authorities with vigilance; officials fulfil their duties; all citizens and all forms of property are equally well protected. The roads have never been safer. Thanks to me there are no more squabbles, no more petty spites, no more parties. Such things are no longer known in France. I have never wished to be anyone's man, I have never sought support from public opinion nor from any class of men. I rely on myself, on the results of what I have successively created in the interests of France, on my institutions, on the moral effect of a government that is not swayed by outside opinions. Whether as First Consul or as Emperor, I have been the people's king; I have governed for the nation and in its interests, without allowing myself to be turned aside by the outcries or the private interests of certain people. This is well known throughout France, and the French people love me. I say the French people, and by that I mean the nation, for I have never shown undue favour to the class that some folk understand by the word 'people'—the dregs of the populace. Nor have I shown favour to the landed gentry, for if the unenlightenment and miseries of the former make them very prone to creating disorders, so do the pretensions of the latter render them quite as dangerous to those in authority. Constantly restive against any sort of power that does not emanate from themselves, if they dared they would be in a continuous state of revolt. Are they not always preaching, in every salon of the undisciplined Faubourg Saint-Germain, the revolt that

they dare not raise? It is the same now as in the days of the League. The leaders of the Vendée fought better for their own privileges than for the rights of the Crown. The unfortunate people is always the dupe. It was the pretensions of the petty squires, even more than those of the greater gentry, that kept that war going. An aristocracy is necessary for France, but it must be on a different basis from that of the old one, which has become incompatible with the new regime. Woe to the sovereign who delivers himself into the hands of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, for it has not changed its nature! Into whatever excesses the Revolution may have been swept, the populace has generally been found to have bowels of mercy. The Faubourg Saint-Germain has none. It wants to reconquer an influence which it imagines belongs to it by right. In its opinion, kings are its own choice, the people are its vassals. Kings must govern by its authority and in its interests, and the people must obey. That is the limit to which the *grands seigneurs* would permit the king to go, if the good old times were ever to return. At one time the Faubourg thought I was its Messiah and would have taken me up. I am still acceptable in their eyes for lack of a better and because they hope my son will prove more manageable than myself. Not daring to rise in revolt, they have submitted without being converted. It matters little to me. As the children of this old aristocracy grow up they will form fresh ideas, they will see that what I offer them is more suitable to the present age than that which their fathers want to restore. The small country landowners, too, will find it advantageous to submit, and my institutions will do the rest. Some of them, perceiving that I wish to be a protector to all classes, have withdrawn apart. They will come back, for above all else they like power and the Court. If they keep up their attitude they may find it too late. At the moment these folk are almost ready to make common cause with such hare-brained visionaries as Lafayette and Tracy,¹ who cry out against despotism as though the very fact that they can protest, intrigue and

¹ Destutt de Tracy, faithful friend of Lafayette, was a senator, member of the Académie Française, and Count of the Empire.

criticize at their ease were not proof enough that no such thing as despotism exists in France."

The Emperor said once again that the weight of his authority was only felt by public officials; that beyond these preliminary wheels of government his influence was imperceptible; that the Law and the independent tribunals administered everything. His government, he said, possessed the great advantage of containing no parties, corporations or groups of people with personal interests to come between it and the nation. There was no caste or class to interpose between the people and the government, whereas under the old regime the nobility, with their pretensions, their privileges and interests, which extended down to the justice meted out by their bailiffs, all came between the common people and those who ruled them. Moreover, the old nobility kept in their own gift and appointment all public posts, whereas now nobility was no more than a nominal distinction, carrying with it respectability but no authority, since a title gave no claim to any office. The Emperor repeated that he acknowledged all claims to pre-eminence equally.

"The Legion of Honour," he said, "is the finest of my institutions. It is, with all due deference to poor Moreau and his dreams,¹ one of the greatest conceptions of modern times, and as well suited to the needs of the Throne as to those of the people. It establishes a fraternity of honour between the civil and the military, between the marshal and the private, between the peasant and the duke. I am the only man alive who knows the French thoroughly, as well as the needs of the peoples and of European society.

"The old regime was full of excellent things which now need only to be adapted to modern conditions. Those people who think that they have a right to interpose themselves between the people and the Emperor do as much harm as the Jacobins, who desired no government of any sort, or at best an authority so split up that it was tantamount to none at all, our

¹ General Moreau's opposition to the institution of the Legion of Honour is well known, as also the story of his decorating his cook with a casserole of honour. Cf. Remacle, *Rélations secrètes*, 238.

habits and failings being what they are. If I had accepted the beliefs of the Jacobins I should have founded a government on the lines of that established in the United States; but I knew France too well not to see that such a thing would be impossible. The lessons we have learned from the Directory have shown this clearly enough. Others, such as Lannes, who had no fixed ideas, would have liked liberty for themselves and their friends, but none for those who held opposite views. The security of the Consul or President would have depended on the loyalty of the Guard.¹ Pretorian guards are greedy, insatiable, and are a heavier drag on the people than on the sovereign. I did not consider that method of governing suitable. Relying on the support of partisans, one becomes a despot despite oneself; and this form of power was repugnant to me. I threw off that yoke soon after I was made First Consul. My eyes were opened to the embezzlement carried on by the Guard. It is impossible to give any idea of what was going on. Being unable to obtain any accounts, I dismissed the chiefs who tried to hamper me by forming round me a ring of apparently devoted men, as though one could govern France by such means.

"There was a desire to get rich, to become indispensable. For my part I wished to extricate France from the abyss into which she had been plunged by the muddle-headedness of the Directory and the Revolution. I was keenly sensible of the good I wanted to accomplish, of the need France had of me and of the confidence that this generous nation inspired in me."

The Emperor spoke once again of the difference that existed between his administration and that of the old regime. "The nation obtains all its necessary guarantees," he said, "in the selection of its officials who come without any kind of distinction from its own ranks and who, as they can have no claim to permanent employment but are liable to be dismissed at any moment, are anxious not to expose themselves to the reproaches of their fellow-citizens. The real respons-

¹ Lannes was gazetted Commandant and Inspector of the Consular Guard, April 16, 1800.

ibility rests upon these men. It could rest in but an illusory way upon men placed in administrative posts through claims of birth or some inherited right, as was heretofore the case."

The Emperor spoke further about the re-establishment of religion, the creation of titles, and the institution of the Legion of Honour. Considerable courage and strength of character had been necessary, he said, to carry through these creations. Though they were eminently in the interests of France and even in the individual interest of those who opposed their creation, yet the Revolution had left a heritage of prejudice, and there were few intelligent men sufficiently broad-minded to grasp those great political questions which are at the root of all State institutions. He went on to say that he had been obliged to exercise all his persistence before he could overcome suspicion. The nobility he had created was only a bauble, a pre-eminence in name just as wealth was a positive one. Actual pre-eminence would exist only in the case of the nobles who formed part of the Chamber of Peers, and in the precincts of the Chamber itself which would have the right of veto. The Senate had been merely a form of transition; a life institution of that kind offered no guarantee to the nation, which required a body of men possessed of the importance which only fortune and independence could bestow. The Senate, moreover, was in need of new blood. A silly and feeble opposition existed on its benches, inspired by a few men who disliked anything in the nature of government; but it lacked virility, and possessed no breadth of outlook or nobility of mind.

Reverting to the subject of the Senate, the Emperor said that it was composed of nothing but spent torches or dark lanterns which would lead the country on the wrong road, even if it overcame its greater difficulties. The greater part of the Senators would, if the occasion arose, imitate Frochot,¹ who liked him, if the Duke of Bassano was to be believed, but who had none the less shown not the slightest objection to

Frochot was Prefect of the Seine and was mixed up in the Malet affair. On his arrival in Paris Napoleon replaced him by M. de Chabrol. Frochot had been given the post of Prefect on March 2, 1808, on Maret's recommendation.

having a room in his house prepared as the council chamber for the government that was to be set up by Malet and Lahorie. What Frochot wanted was to remain Prefect of Paris. The continual changes of government since the Revolution have made men too familiar with such a state of things. This is an evil which only time will cure.

"Not only does Frochot owe everything to me, he has also sworn fidelity. Yet, when he believed that I was dead he was faithless to my son and to his oath, though he considered himself no less an honest man. If he had promised you a hundred millions he would have paid you on the appointed day. Nothing would make him fail his given word, yet he broke his oath without the slightest scruple. Such are the men and the notions begotten by the times we live in. Who is to be trusted?"

My remarks directed the conversation to various things that have caused discontent in France, notably conscription, into which the needs of continual warfare have swept all those who compose the classes liable to service. The Emperor replied:

"I agree that conscription is a law bearing harshly upon families, on account of the frequent calls which circumstances have caused me to make; but it is national, because it allows of neither privilege nor exception. In times of peace it will even become popular, for the French love the career of arms, and as the door to promotion is open to ability and courage, an honourable career will thereby be opened to many young men. In this, as in so many things, the appreciation of principles of equality gives strength to the government and ensures success to the levies. If I granted exemption to one single conscript, if there was a single privilege granted to anyone, no matter whom, not one man would obey the order to march. The notions of equality that made the Revolution are to-day an integral part of the government's strength. It is because no one anticipates or suspects any preferential treatment and because it has no interest in showing favouritism that the government inspires no distrust. Public confidence in the justice of its dealings gives it as much authority

as the exercise of its power. That is the secret of my success. It is said that I love war, but as its charges are laid upon all alike, as I show no preference for anyone and recompense all alike who show courage, everyone submits to it. To inspire people with supreme confidence in my sense of justice, to convince them that I favour no man's interest above that of his neighbour, there lies the grand secret of how to govern the French. That is my all-powerful lever."

The Emperor made another remark to the effect that a Frenchman is a fault-finder by nature.

"Society in the salons," he said, "is always in a state of hostility against the government. Everything is criticized and nothing praised. Although society men and women are in general courtiers, and the greater numbers of them frankly flatterers, even in their chattering they are none the less inimical to the government in power. There was a great outcry because I happened to banish from Paris for a few months certain persons who would have had to be arrested a fortnight later if I had not sent them out of the country in time and had not in that way brought their intrigues to naught.¹ That is what they call my tyranny. I am said to be a tyrant because I will not allow a few schemers and fools to get themselves talked about as conspirators; their plots make me laugh, and I would let them come to a head if it did not mean that I should have to exercise severity, whereas it is my desire to be firm, and not harsh. Under the old regime no one at Versailles was willing to obey. This sort of privilege ruined and discredited the Court. Mistresses and favourites were all intriguing to make or unmake Ministers, for they knew that the sovereign was weak; this was actually conspiring against his authority.

"Did it not reach the point of risking our fame just for the sake of ruining such-and-such a General or Minister, without a thought of the blood that this treasonable behaviour would cost France and the consequences that a defeat might

¹ See in the *Mémorial*, 1823 ed., III, 4176, for what Napoleon said about Madame de Chevreuse's exile. "She hoped to start the Fronde insurrection again, but I was not a minor on the throne."

bring upon the country? Robbery was carried on with impunity in those days, if one had a certain amount of credit and the support of a few men in office. The entire Court, even the Princes of the Blood, were interested in business enterprises or took allowances from contractors. Money was made out of everything. The streets of Paris were badly kept and even worse lighted because the Princes, notably the Comte d'Artois and the highest of the nobility, accepted commission or pensions from the scavenging and lighting contractors. I have proof of this in my possession.

"Such an abuse as this," he continued, "is unknown in my government. There are no gratuities, so far as I am aware. Men are paid good salaries, they are paid regularly, and it is well known that I should show no mercy to swindlers, still less to officials who did business on their own account. Never has the Treasury been in such good order. It has been necessary to make examples. Sometimes the delinquents have been men who were connected with prominent personages; but I have studied no considerations of that sort. Feeling myself strong enough to do what was right, I have gone on to my goal allowing nothing to turn me aside, paying no heed to the outcries of various cliques. Who makes an outcry in France?" he went on. "A few salons, a few people who have soon forgotten their debt to me for the position or fortune they now enjoy, others whom I have brought back from exile and restored to their property, which they would never have recovered but for me; a few obscure lordlings who are discontented at no longer being sprinkled with holy water on Sundays; a number of self-centred shopkeepers who are under a cloud at the moment because they can find no scope for speculation; some army contractors, veritable bloodsuckers whose ill-gotten gains I have made them disgorge. These are the people who cry out against me. The mass of the nation is just; the nation sees that I am striving for its good fame, its happiness, its future. What can I personally wish for? Born of a distinguished class, though of an unlucky family, I now occupy the greatest throne in the world. I have given law to the whole of Europe.

"To make the fortunes of those who have served France well, I have furnished millions without touching the State revenues. In my privy purse, and in the 'extraordinary domain' I possess all the money and treasure that a man could possibly desire; but I have no need of money for myself. No one is less occupied than I in personal affairs.

"That France should prosper under my government is the object of my desires, of my ambition, of my entire attention. It is I who have re-established order, regulated finance, paid the country's debts. I am becoming too heavy and stout not to like rest or have need of it, nor to feel seriously wearied by the constant movement and activity demanded by warfare. As with all men, my physical condition affects my mental state. You tell me, and everyone likes to believe it, that I love glory and war, that I envisage what you call universal monarchy. But this universal empire is a dream, and I have awakened from it. If, once upon a time, I might have been carried away by this warlike passion, it would, like all passions, have misled me for but a moment.

"This war with Russia is an unfortunate affair," said the Emperor, seeking to tweak my ear in a friendly way. "I was mistaken, my Master of the Horse, not as to the object or political aims of this war, but as to the method of waging it. I should have remained at Witepsk. By now Alexander would have been on his knees to me. The dividing of the Russian Army after the crossing of the Niemen amazed me. As the Russians had not been able to defeat us in any direction, and as Kutusoff had been forced on the Tsar in place of Barclay, who was the better soldier, I imagined that a people who did not know how to fight and a sovereign who allowed a bad General to be foisted on him would certainly ask for terms. I stayed a fortnight too long at Moscow. This will result in it being said that the Russians are invincible in their own country, because of their climate; but it will be wrong, for with better foresight, if I had followed my original plan, they would have been lost."

The Emperor added that people entirely misunderstood his character. He was essentially a man of reason and not of

imagination. This failure to comprehend him arose from not understanding his views. He owed it to no one to give an account of the means employed to attain the ends he had in mind. His character was positive. Even if he were not hindered by obstacles that limited the horizon of other people, he only devoted himself to what was possible and also truly great, and therefore useful. Everything was, consequently, a question of calculation, the outcome of reasoning. Habitually exercising greater foresight and deeper calculation than others, he weighed things in advance and for a long time.

"I weighed carefully and for a long time," he said, "all the sacrifices that would be entailed by this struggle with England. Definitely, in this struggle lies the basic solution of all the questions that are now agitating the world and even individuals. It is not I," he went on, "who have lost the colonies nor let the navies of Europe be destroyed. On the contrary, it is I who have toiled unceasingly to re-establish them. I have my ship-building yards everywhere. In two years' time you will be amazed at the number of my vessels, at the development and strength of my armaments. It was the Revolution that made the power of England. I found her preponderance already established. I strengthened it by signing the Peace of Amiens and doing nothing against the spirit of that treaty. The expedition of San Domingo proved conclusively that I had no other thought in mind save to maintain the peace and internal prosperity of France, for I sent the very pick of the army to that distant colony.¹ It was England who violated the treaty, it was she who stole the entire wealth of our commerce at a time of profound peace. I maintained this peace in order to have time to create a navy which might protect our rights and defend our property, because political equilibrium depends on the commercial balance being kept even. Up to a certain point national strength is as much a question of money as of territory, and consequently lies in the relative power of states no less than in the size of their population. To maintain this equilibrium,

¹ An allusion to the 1802 expedition, commanded by Leclerc, to reconquer the island from Toussaint-Louverture.

so essential to every interest, one must be in a position to force England to consider what she is risking before she starts playing the pirate on continental shipping without a declaration of war.

He added that it had never crossed his mind to break the Treaty of Amiens; that he only wanted to be in a position not to receive affronts when he had no intention of giving them. He realized too keenly the advantages of a maritime peace, and the influence it exerted on the internal prosperity and tranquillity of Europe, even to have thought of disturbing it. Instead of loyally throwing down the gauntlet, England had started the war in a most iniquitous manner; and thus it was the cause of good faith, of Europe and of commerce generally that he was fighting to defend. The measures taken by the English had forced him to take reprisals.

"It is, indeed, for the most cherished interests of Europe that I am now fighting, and demanding so many sacrifices from France," said the Emperor. "I have the foresight of a wise politician, whereas the other sovereigns are simply blinded by fear that has no foundation. They seem to fear nothing but the power of France, while it is France alone who can defend the commercial liberties of Europe. The old balance of power no longer exists and the old methods can never restore it. In the world of to-day everything is altered, changed, rejuvenated. New paths have to be opened out. If the Cabinets of Europe were to go into these matters they would appreciate my efforts instead of being disquieted by them. By openly seconding me they would meet with less vexations and the goal would be sooner reached. I have only one goal before me; that is, peace with England, which means a general peace. Without that peace all others are but truces. In another year, or even less, if I had not miscarried in Russia, the Continent would have been more than indemnified for the sacrifices I have asked of it. Never have I concealed from myself the fact that it was a vast undertaking. If I failed, the harm that the Continent was bound to suffer in consequence would soon demonstrate the importance of the end I wanted to achieve. The Russian alliance did not prove as useful to me as I expected. It was

not enough to close the North of Europe to English commerce if the Levant remained open to her vessels. To gain the end in view it would have been necessary to launch a great attack against her, simultaneously with threatening her power in India and at least closing the Levantine waters. But the execution of this project presented more difficulties than I anticipated. Each state has its own particular interests. A great Power cannot devote its energies to a cause of only secondary importance. It was essential that the Tsar Alexander should be willing to enter whole-heartedly into the spirit of the Treaty of Tilsit. The closing of his ports, which he immediately reopened for neutral contraband, failed to alarm England. The only way left of doing harm to England was to undermine her credit, and that required time. Being a pastoral country, Russia was bound to suffer from the interruption of commerce, and was hard put to it to await the result. It needed a stronger will than that of the Tsar to persuade the nation to stand fast and wait for better times. In France I have created internal industries that have replaced her foreign commerce. This could not be done in Russia, where everything moves slowly. The great inconvenience for this Empire is the lack of any but paper money, and paper of which the market price, one might almost say the value, depends on the confidence of foreign exchanges. In short, a great number of circumstances have combined to thwart my plans and deceive my expectations."

I spoke to the Emperor about the loss of the Spanish fleet,¹ and of her colonies,² as a result of the invasion.

"One cannot always be successful," he replied. "I was badly seconded, wrongly informed and deceived in that affair. Everything that I did not expect happened, but as is always the case, these inconveniences saved me from others. There

¹ Spain had declared war on England on December 14, 1804, and on January 5, 1805, signed a naval convention with France agreeing to the use of her fleet. Part of this, under the command of the Duke of Gravina, was destroyed or captured at Trafalgar; another squadron, composed of six men-of-war under Juste Salcedo, was blockaded for three years in Cartagena harbour.

² Notwithstanding their hankering after independence, which is the subject of the remarks above, at first the Spanish colonies took sides with Ferdinand VII. Cf. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *L'Espagne et Napoléon*, I, 368.

were compensations. Undoubtedly I was forced to a greater deployment of forces and to more expense than I had expected, but at the same time I forced England to expenses and sacrifices in far greater proportion, and much more onerous for them than for me. In the actual circumstances it was something to have drawn all her forces to Spain and kept them there. I certainly felt the loss of the Spanish fleet, but the seamen remained. This country lacks no material for building another fleet. A few years of peace will repair all that damage."

For the moment the Emperor did not open his mind further in reply to my observations on the loss of the Spanish colonies and her fleet. The conversation reverted to the subject of England.

"If it were possible to have a three or four years' truce," he said, "Europe would very soon perceive what a rival influence that Power exerts, what an enemy she is to commerce and what a heavy burden her monopoly imposes. Before long we shall see the votes of Germany challenging the prohibitive system that is suffered to-day with such repugnance, and demanding vengeance on this foreign government that proves such an enemy of any kind of industry, on this colossus of commerce that can only exist on its debts and subsidies or face its expenses by the monopoly it enforces against other nations. But by then it will be too late. Europe will never again be situated as favourably as to-day. The period of quiet will only render these sacrifices more painful. The capital that has been amassed as a result of peace will be put in jeopardy, and to avoid losing it all it will be necessary to resign oneself to suffering things to remain as they are. I seized the only available instant. I acted as a wise and far-seeing policy dictated. Had I done otherwise, I should have earned the undying reproaches of posterity and history."

The Emperor insisted at some length on the possible advantages of the situation created by the events that had ranged the United States against England.¹ He had no doubt

¹ The United States declared war against England on June 18, 1812. The cause of this war was the refusal of the English Cabinet to abolish the Order in Council which made it necessary for all neutral vessels to call in at London or Malta for permission to navigate.

that the actual struggle would end to the advantage of the former.¹ He considered this to be the real turning-point of their political emancipation and their development as a great Power. He talked of the respective methods of aggression and defence, as well as of the endeavours that England might make, but he came to the conclusion that reverses at some points, where they might be caught unawares, would simply arouse the Americans and temper the national spirit.

"The English," he said, "will end by subscribing to all that the Americans desire, and the American government, placed in the hands of able statesmen, will gain increased strength. It will profit by the opportunity to make the nation give it the means of organizing and maintaining a larger army, of forming the nucleus of a permanent force, and will obtain more facilities for assembling and forming a militia. If the Americans are wise they will build forts, even strong fortresses, at certain important points, and this will be of the utmost service to them in the future. This juncture," he said, "will give the United States an anti-English turn that will strengthen our French system, and in the future that country will be England's most powerful adversary. Before thirty years have passed it will make her tremble."

These considerations led the Emperor to speak of the emancipation of the Spanish colonies, which he regarded as a certainty, and something ultimately advantageous to our interests, although for the moment their revolt from the mother country offered to England a useful commercial outlet that would save her industry from its threatened ruin. In the great States that were being formed in the New World he envisaged fresh rivals to England. According to him, there was every reason why these new countries should fit in with the political system of the United States. The independence of all colonial possessions seemed to him a natural consequence of the action of the Spanish colonies; and he considered that the time when this would happen was not far distant. As a whole, it appeared to him that these changes would prove

¹ The English-American War was brought to a conclusion by Jackson's crushing defeat of the English at New Orleans, January 8, 1815.

to our political and commercial interest if we could seize the first possible moment to establish good relations with those countries. War with the mother country and the prejudices that would be aroused thereby ought to facilitate the forming of good relations between us and the revolted colonies rather than prove an obstacle. As their primary desire was to cast off their old yoke, the self-interest of these new states would induce them not to grant any exclusive privileges, but to seek direct relations with all the maritime states of Europe. The very war that England was waging in Spain, ostensibly for the cause of Ferdinand, would prejudice her government in its relations with the new countries. It was improbable that they would proclaim a Spanish prince. He thought they were more likely to form a republic on the model of the United States, or would put at the head some of the chief men who had fought for their independence. He cited the United States, which, peopled by Englishmen, are nevertheless the most violent enemies to England, and from this he concluded that the peoples of the New World would be as anti-Spanish as the inhabitants of New York are anti-English, and that those nations would be equally anti-English if England continued to support Spain. He doubted whether she would do this, as the English Minister considered only the real interests of the country.

This conversation, from my record of which I have suppressed many details of less importance than the points I have noted, brought us to Görlitz.¹ From that town I sent Amodru in advance to warn Baron de Serra, our Minister at Dresden,² of our approach. I told him that the Emperor would sup and sleep at his house, and that he was to inform the King of Saxony³ that His Majesty would go to see him incognito. The snow had drifted to such depths in the valleys that our progress was slow. When, at last, we reached the posting-house of Bautzen,⁴ we were kept waiting so long for

¹ On the Neisse.

² Jean Charles François, Baron de Serra, was born at Genoa, August 29, 1780. Minister of France at the Court of the King of Saxony. He had previously been French Resident at Warsaw.

³ Frederick Augustus I.

⁴ On the Spree.

ONE MORE STAGE

fresh horses that I had to alight from the sledge and go in person to ascertain the reason of the delay. This was occasioned by nothing more than the habitual dilatoriness of the postmaster, and the prevalent bad habit of giving the horses their feed just when the traveller arrived. In vain did I urge the postmaster to hasten matters. There was nothing to be done but exercise patience and get warm while waiting. The Emperor took the opportunity to snatch a nap for three-quarters of an hour; for my part, I took notes of the interesting conversations I had just had with His Majesty.

CHAPTER IX

BY SLEDGE WITH THE EMPEROR

3. *From Dresden to Paris*

WE did not reach Dresden until midnight.¹ Our postilion, who had assured me that he knew where the French Minister lived, spent so long driving us up and down the town without finding it that at last I grew impatient and ordered him to stop and make inquiries. But everyone was asleep. The whole place was in darkness and we had to go on a long way before we could see a lighted window. The postilion knocked at the door and rang the bell for some time before a man, wearing a nightcap, put his head out of the window and asked what we wanted. Upon our asking him to direct us to the French Minister's house, the doctor (for such he was, as I subsequently learned) shut his window with a bang, evidently considering that he was under no obligation to expose himself to the cold by talking to people in good health. So we had to resume our exploration of the town for some considerable time in search of a constable. Luckily we met a Saxon who proved more obliging than the doctor. He conducted us to M. de Serra's door where we found everything ready, as though he had been waiting for us. The Emperor started work at once. He dictated to me despatches to the King of Naples and the Prince of Neuchâtel, several orders for Warsaw and a despatch for Vienna.² When he had finished his corre-

¹ At two o'clock in the morning, according to Bourgoing (*Souvenirs militaires*, 199). This is the same hour as given by M. de Serra, but these two persons are speaking of the time of his arrival at the residence of the French Minister, whereas Caulaincourt is referring to his arrival in Dresden, and, as the text shows, a certain interval elapsed between the two events. This was the night of December 13-14, 1812.

² See Napoleon's letter to Francis I, dated from Dresden, December 14th (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19585) and another to Frederick-William of Prussia, of the same date, in *Dernières lettres inédites de Napoléon Ier*, II, 287.

spondence the Emperor left us the task of sending it off. He supped and went to bed, telling me to wake him when the King of Saxony arrived, for that sovereign did not want His Majesty to be put to the trouble of going to the palace.¹ While he took his rest, M. de Serra helped me send off the despatches.

The Emperor had been asleep for an hour when the King of Saxony appeared,² accompanied by Counts de Loss³ and Marcolini.⁴ He insisted on His Majesty receiving him in bed; consequently I had the honour of taking the King immediately to his apartment. The two sovereigns were together for three-quarters of an hour.⁵

Instructions had already been given for the continuation of our journey through Saxony. Our sledge was not in a fit state to proceed farther,⁶ so the King lent the Emperor his berline fitted with runners.⁷ After I had had the honour of accompanying the King to his carriage⁸ the Emperor told me that he would start at five o'clock and bid me awake him at half-past-four, in time to sign his letters before taking his

¹ As soon as he arrived the Emperor sent Wonsowicz to the palace to announce to the King that His Majesty was preparing to pay him a visit. Frederick-Augustus rose from his bed at once, and without waiting for one of his own carriages to be brought round he hurriedly took a sedan chair from the public stand nearby and was carried to the French Minister's house. (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 197.)

² At three o'clock in the morning. (Serra to Maret, December 21, 1812. *Archives du département des Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique, Saxe*, Vol. 83, 145.)

³ Jean-Adolphe, Count de Loss, born at Dresden, May 16, 1768, died at Dresden, May 7, 1852. He had been Minister of State to the Elector of Saxony and was Grand Marshal of the Court.

⁴ Count Camillo Marcolini, Minister of State, born at Fano (States of the Church), April 2, 1739, died at Prague, July 20, 1814.

⁵ "The meeting of the two sovereigns was very affectionate." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 199.)

⁶ When I returned to Dresden in 1813 I was assured that an Englishman had bought it as an historical relic, and that everyone had come to look at it when the Allies were in occupation. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

⁷ "As the sledge which had served the Emperor up to that moment could go no farther, it was replaced by a Court carriage mounted on runners; this vehicle was provisioned from the palace cellars and kitchens." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 199.)

⁸ While the King was with the Emperor the chairmen who had carried him thither had gone back to the palace to order a carriage to be sent round to take the King home. (*Ibid.*, 199.)

seat in the carriage.¹ At his orders I wrote to Baron Saint-Aignan, his Minister at Weimar,² instructing him to prepare his carriage and have it ready at Erfurt. For two relays we were drawn by horses from the Court,³ and near Leipzig we passed the couriers who had been sent on to have horses ready for us in my name. So we were obliged to stay in that town to let them get ahead of us. Dusk was falling. While supper was being prepared the Emperor had the curiosity to stroll about the square and in the gardens outside the city. We stayed outdoors for a couple of hours; the cold was much less intense than in Poland.⁴

¹ They did not start, however, until seven o'clock, on the morning of the 14th. (Serra to Maret, Dresden, December 21, 1812, *loc. cit.*) Bourgoing even says eight o'clock. Here is the account Serra despatched to Maret (*Archives des affaires étrangères, Correspondance politique, Saxe*, Vol. 83, 137): "I was about to despatch my letter dated yesterday when a courier coming from Glogau pulled up at my door, at eleven o'clock at night, and said that he left at a short distance behind him the Master of the Horse, Duke of Vicenza. The letter he brought me, which was, in fact, from the Duke, informed me as to the identity of the person who, passing under the Duke's name and actually accompanied by him, was due to arrive at my door at any moment. I took all the steps that such short notice rendered possible, as well as issuing the necessary orders for the continuation of their journey. I had the inexpressible happiness of receiving and entertaining His Imperial and Royal Majesty in my house; he arrived at two o'clock in the morning and deigned to sup and sleep for some time beneath my roof. He started at seven o'clock in the morning by the Leipzig road."

² Nicolas Auguste Marie Rousseau, Baron, and subsequently Count, de Saint-Aignan, born at Nantes, March 8, 1770, died at Paris, May 21, 1858. Originally intended for the Navy, he entered the Army and was promoted Lieutenant in the Artillery Regiment of Toul, September 1, 1786; Captain, February 6, 1792, he resigned his commission on May 15th of that year. Not having emigrated, he entered the service again, November 7, 1805, as Major in the Isenbourg Regiment, and became Caulaincourt's aide-de-camp, September 23, 1806. Baron of the Empire, December 31, 1809, Equerry to the Emperor, December 21, 1810. In December 1811 he was appointed French Minister at Weimar, with instructions to keep an eye on the doings of the petty German princes. Prisoner of war in 1813, he returned to France in 1814 charged with the important mission mentioned in the preface to this work. M. de Saint-Aignan was Caulaincourt's brother-in-law, having married the Duke's sister, Augustine-Amicie de Caulaincourt, widow of M. de Thelusson. Under Louis-Philippe he became one of the Generals of the National Guard of Paris and Peer of France (September 11, 1835).

³ "When the Emperor's carriage left Dresden it was followed by a sledge in which the King of Saxony sent, as escort, two sergeants of his guard." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 201.)

⁴ Basing his story on Wonsowicz's narrative, Bourgoing gives a much fuller account of this stay at Leipzig than Caulaincourt. According to Bourgoing, Napoleon put up for some hours at the Hôtel de Prusse, where he received the French Consul, M. Theremin, talked with him for a long time and dined with him. For this interesting conversation see Bourgoing (*Itinéraire de Napoléon Ier*, 77).

During the journey that we had just made the Emperor talked about the Tsar Alexander, Erfurt, the Duke of Abrantes, the peerage and the hatred in which the nobility were held. What I am about to record is the gist of several conversations in the course of which he repeated the same things. He spoke in praise of Count Daru.

"He works like a horse," he said; "he is a man of rare capacity, my best administrator. He has never asked me for anything. He administered Prussia and the conquered territories with a tact and delicacy of feeling of which he alone has given the example.¹ In an enemy country he lived at his own expense, not even benefiting by the advantages enjoyed by others, and which he was entitled to claim. I took care to recompense him for his disinterestedness."

The Emperor returned to the subject of Tilsit. He had found an ideology in the Tsar Alexander, and ill-digested notions as to his situation; but he was actuated by excellent intentions: though he lacked experience. The emotions which estranged him from his wife² had filled him with false ideas even to the need experienced by nations and great States for an heir to the dynasties which ruled over them. These notions had apparently carried him to the length of admitting advantages in an elective monarchy dependent on merit, whereas hereditary succession more often placed on the throne an incapable, ill-trained fool. The Tsar Alexander felt no regret at his Empress having borne him no children. In general, he substituted all the virtues of good nature for those resulting from clear reasoning. He was a conscientious private individual, not a prince. In his childlessness he saw only one responsibility the less, and a responsibility which by his love of what was right seemed to him a serious burden.

From the details given subsequently in Caulaincourt's narrative, as well as in Bourgoing's, it seems that the Emperor reached Leipzig between four o'clock and six on the afternoon of December 14th, and started again at seven o'clock.

¹ Count Bruno Daru had been appointed Quartermaster-General of the Grand Army and of the conquered countries in 1806, and in the same year became French Minister at Berlin.

² An allusion to Alexander's passion for Marie-Antovna Narishkin, *née* Princess Czertwertenski. According to the Grand Duke Nicolas Mikhailowitch (*L'Empereur Alexandre Ier*, 48, 56) the affair lasted from 1804 until 1818.

He was apparently imbued with the idea that monarchs ought to govern for the people, and are instituted for the people.

"That is also my maxim," added the Emperor, dwelling on this principle as if he suspected me of doubting it, and wished to convince me. "Instead of enjoying it, the Tsar appeared to me to be weary of sovereign power and a monarch's life, with its round of exacting duties for the man who regards the happiness of his people as a sacred trust held by him from Providence. Alexander is very religious. He is too liberal in his views and too democratic for his Russians. He will be the victim of this: that nation needs a strong hand. He would be more suited to the Parisians, he is just the sort of king the French would like. Gallant to women, flattering with men, even with those towards whom he ought to show his displeasure (for he knows better than anyone else how to hide his feelings), his fine bearing and extreme courtesy are very pleasing. Your good Frenchman loves flattery. He does not like my serious mien, and my firmness often proves irksome to him. Our conversations at Tilsit, his relations with you, and what passed at Erfurt have all combined to form the Tsar's opinions. He is clever. Nothing escapes him and his memory serves him perfectly. Since that time his own reflexions and the course of events have furnished him with the experience that he previously lacked. He came to Erfurt quite a different man from what he appeared to be at Tilsit.

"I noticed at Erfurt that he was defiant, and unspeakably obstinate. He wanted to treat with me as between equals. As a matter of fact, circumstances were in his favour and he took advantage of them. He might have obtained much more, but fortunately he only paid attention to the effect that would be produced in Russia by the hope of getting Wallachia and Moldavia; he did not insist upon the evacuation of the forts on the Oder and of part of Prussia. More fortunately still, Austria exhibited some ill-humour and distrust. If the man she sent to Erfurt¹ had been enabled to explain openly the

¹ An allusion to Baron de Vincent's having been sent to Erfurt by the Emperor of Austria. Cf. Alb. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre Ier*, I, 418.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

views held by his Court and show some interest in Prussia, it would have made some impression on Alexander. I should have been placed in a very awkward situation: but even Prussia only sent an incapable fellow,¹ and no one profited by the occasion. Anyhow, I was prepared for whatever might happen. I still had my troops at hand; the sacrifice of Spain was three-quarters made; I should have crushed Austria before anyone could have stopped me. The Russians had not got over their defeat and were in no condition to make war. It might even have done me a service to force me to leave Spain; though it would have been disagreeable, after the reverses we had met with there, and especially to have left the English in the field.

“Threatened by Austria, I should have evacuated a great part of Prussia and retained only a fort on the Oder, as security for the imposts. It is probable that such an arrangement would have caused many changes. We should not be here now. Other combinations would have been necessary in order to establish a buffer state. With Prussia liberated, restored and re-established, all political combinations would have been modified. Perhaps things would have been better and more advanced, for I should have been obliged to pay more attention to my war in Spain; I should have induced Russia to maintain the alliance and carry out the Continental System against England. Thus it is that the most insignificant incidents can change the fate of the world, just as the mistakes of our enemies often serve them to better purpose than the talents of their Generals and lead us into even greater errors ourselves. I was wrong in not remaining at Witepsk to organize the country, or in not leaving Moscow eight days after I entered the city. The reverses I have met with are solely due to that. I thought that I should be able to make peace, and that the Russians were anxious for it. I was deceived and I deceived myself. Then, Maret and the Abbé de Pradt have not turned Poland to account. I expected to find it in arms, and it was asleep. Maret beguiled the Poles, the Archbishop discouraged them. I could not have made a

¹ Count von der Goltz.

worse choice or entrusted my affairs to a less capable man. I have been deceived by his cleverness. He knows how to argue and flatter, but he is incapable of showing action. The most insignificant of my secretaries would have done better. Men of his stamp, belonging to the old regime, are usually worth more than that. They are not liked in the Army or the Court; yet look at Narbonne! Never did leader inspire more zeal in his men; despite his age he undergoes fatigues and privations like a young man. Yet he is upheld solely by a sense of honour. You men of the old army do not like these new adherents;¹ in general, you do not like the *émigrés*. Every time I admit one, whether to the Court or to the Army, I find grumbling and sulking. The bolder spirits take umbrage; it is not so long since they were even ready to rear like a horse annoyed by the bad hands of a poor rider.

“ If I were a man subject to influence, I should have been almost forbidden to admit any *émigré*, so jealous and uneasy are these men of the Revolution. I have not lacked for advice of the sort, but this clumsy zeal has simply served the purpose of those whom they wished to get dismissed. I thought that with most it was nothing but ambition, the fear of there being fewer posts going, more competition for what there were. Courtiers have been thus from time immemorial; self-interest is everything, the country nothing. I am Emperor of the French, I must protect all alike, show equal benevolence to all. It is my duty to unite all opinions, to merge all interests, to encourage the zeal of all who offer themselves. No one has to render account to me save for the proper discharge of what I have committed to their care. It is not for me to recall antecedents, unless it be to award some recompense. The old nobility still hold great properties, many families are of historic or honourable repute. The son of a Minister, a Chancellor, a Marshal of Louis XV or Louis XVI cannot be merged in the crowd; otherwise there would be an end of civilized society. It is in the interests of France that I rally the old families to the Crown, so that they may feel

¹ Count Louis de Narbonne-Lara, born in 1755, did not return from the emigration until the Consulate.

that it protects them, and shall no longer be its enemies. In general, their children and relatives have served me well."

I maintained that the opposition of which he spoke was well founded so far as some people were concerned, for they but little merited the personal benevolence he showed towards them; though so far as M. de Narbonne was concerned, he was universally like and appreciated.

"This even applies to you, Caulaincourt," he said. "Although you have risen from the ranks like the rest, though you are a soldier and your success the fruit of your own labours, as is the case with all my Generals—yet your birth and your position as a nobleman arouse jealousy. I have had to uphold you, and on more than one occasion have been obliged to defend you. You are an object of envy; I have often received accusations against you; they tried to discredit you in my opinion after Moreau's trial, because you continued to see him, even after the days of the Army of the Rhine.¹ It was but a pretext; your real fault, in the eyes of those zealous souls, lies in the fact that you are of noble birth. I was not taken in. These prejudices are shared by many honest men. Having brought about your downfall they would have attacked Duroc and Lauriston. The men who are so proud of bearing a title to-day, not so long ago were bitter against those who had one. Junot alone does not share this weakness. He considers himself more a marquis, more of a great nobleman, than the Beauvaus; but Lannes and Bessières and Lefebvre were eaten up with resentment. If I did the slightest thing for a man of noble birth, even if his claim to a title extended to no farther than his father's shaving-brush, they talked to me as though I were acting against my own interests; but I saw through them. Fortunately I have never had a favourite, but if I had singled out any particular person, if I had favoured anyone of noble birth with my confidence, it would have made some men actually ill. By consolidating all interests, by mingling all classes and fortunes, time will exhaust these jealousies."

¹ As Colonel of the 2nd Carabineers, Caulaincourt made the campaign of 1800 in the Army of the Rhine, under the command of Moreau.

The Emperor spoke well of various persons, especially of Marshal Bessières, upon whose attachment he relied. He praised his integrity, and his effective administration of the Guard.¹

"I was obliged to take it from Lannes,"² he said. "The itch to amass a fortune, and the advice he took from some knaves who made him their dupe, would have ruined him had I not removed him from that administration. No man," he repeated, "has ever been or still is³ more attached to me than Lannes is at heart. More than once he has given me proofs of this by exposing himself in perilous circumstances, but he loves me as a man loves his mistress, and wants to manage me, or at least influence me, in order to obtain what he wants. Having been often refused, for his demands are in favour of schemers, he loses his temper; and being passionate by nature, he is then capable of anything. More than once, in such moments, he has done me a wrong which might have proved serious to anyone else, if he had to do with a sovereign of a different nature from mine, or one who held the human race in greater esteem."

After mentioning several acts which had led him to forbid Lannes for a time to appear at the Tuileries, the Emperor went on to say that this Marshal had a strain of opposition and censoriousness in his character which blinded him and outweighed his attachment to his person. He was indiscreet and immoderate. To support this assertion he told me of a certain person to whom the Marshal had boasted of what he had said to the Tsar of Russia, shortly before the last war with Austria. At the time of the Erfurt interview the Emperor had accredited Lannes to meet the Tsar,⁴ and as he travelled in the

¹ The Duke of Istria had been appointed Commandant of the Cavalry of the Imperial Guard in May 1812.

² Lannes had been Commandant and Inspector of the Consular Guard from April 16, 1800, until November 14, 1801, when he was removed and sent to Portugal as French Minister, as a result of his exceeding his credit of 200,000 francs for the clothing of the Guard.

³ Lannes had died May 31, 1809. The Emperor's use of the present tense, as recorded by Caulaincourt, must be the result of an error on the part of whoever copied the MS.

⁴ Lannes was sent to meet the Tsar as a compliment. He met him at Friedberg, on this side of the Vistula, and accompanied him in his carriage.

carriage with that monarch, he told him that the Emperor meant to deceive him, that Napoleon's ambition knew no bounds, that he only breathed war as the means of reaching the end he had in view, and that he, the Tsar, should know better than to trust him. Lannes even boasted of having added various intimate details and cited facts to enlighten the Tsar, as he called it, and prevented his becoming the Emperor's dupe.

"I heard this in confidence," said His Majesty, "and it explained Alexander's conduct and his distrust at Erfurt. I did not mention the matter to the Marshal; it would have compromised the man who reported it to me, and I might have had further occasion for his services. Nothing I could have said to the Marshal would have changed him. Had he found himself unmasked he would have become an irreconcilable enemy, whereas he subsequently behaved like an honest fellow. Besides, in other circumstances he had made a rampart of his body in my defence and he died a hero's death, though his conduct had been that of a traitor, for his mission to the Tsar was simply a matter of courtesy and he had not been called upon to express any opinion on me or my affairs. He was not proof against flattering remarks or the confidence that Alexander pretended to place in him; still less was he able to forget an old grudge he had against me—I do not know on what score; for he was as violent in his feelings as he was impetuous on the field of battle. In his latter years he had an admirable coolness and had become as distinguished a General as he was audacious a leader. He was one of my best Generals, perhaps the most efficient on the battle-field. Men are like that, Caulaincourt," said the Emperor. "I am condemned for holding them in slight esteem. Am I wrong? Should I ever show pardon, should I ever forget, if I expected them to be better than they can be or than they really are?"

I returned once more to the inn at Leipzig where, by the time we returned, the stove had become red-hot to warm us.

Lannes recounted the conversations he had with the Tsar during this journey in a letter published by R. Rittard des Portes, in the *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, for January 1890, p. 143, but naturally he does not appear in the same light to himself as he did to Napoleon.

Our dinner or supper, whichever you like to call it, was not yet ready, so the Emperor stretched himself on some chairs which I had placed together near the fire, and I seized the opportunity to continue my notes. At last, supper was served. Extremely impatient to be on the road again, His Majesty cut the meal as short as he could. Just as he was going downstairs a young Frenchman, who said he was an officer on the staff and was staying at the hotel, presented himself to the Emperor for the purpose of giving an account, as he said, of a secret mission on which he had been sent by the General of the Staff. I was habitually so close to the Emperor at any time he was liable to be accosted, that I found myself between him and this officer, who was so eager that he jostled us. A crowd had collected, attracted by the splendid appearance of the King of Saxony's sledge. The Emperor was hurrying to reach this vehicle and for the moment paid no attention to the man, but, struck by his manner rather than by his insistence, His Majesty paused. Then, guessing that it was a spy posing as an officer, if not some ill-intentioned fellow, he promptly dismissed him. The whole bearing and appearance of this officer appeared to me suspicious. As we left the town I looked behind the carriage, for I had a presentiment that he was following us. There he was, in fact, seated beside our courier, telling him that he had been ordered to accompany us. I ordered him to get down, but it was not easy to make him obey.¹

Beyond Lutzen² there was so little snow in certain parts of the road that the runners of the berline broke. After leaving Auerstädt³ we had to abandon the King's fine sledge and entered Vigenov⁴ at daybreak⁵ in the courier's modest

¹ Bourgoing does not mention this incident, nor does Senator Gross, Municipal Counsellor of Leipzig who, moreover, only knew of the Emperor's visit by hearsay and gives times of arrival and departure that are manifestly wrong. (Gross, *Souvenirs inédites de Napoléon*, published by Captain Velung, pp. 12, 57.) According to Bourgoing, Napoleon left the Hôtel de Prusse at seven o'clock on the evening of December 14th.

² The campaign of 1813 was to immortalize this place, which lies nineteen kilometres south-west of Leipzig, between that city and Naumburg.

³ Between Naumburg and Erfurt.

⁴ This little place is not to be found even on large-scale maps.

⁵ December 15th.

calèche. The postmaster, who knew me, came to chat while the relay was being put to, and I believe he recognized the Emperor, although he gave no sign of having done so. His Majesty partook of coffee without alighting from the carriage. At Erfurt we found Baron de Saint-Aignan¹ at the post-house. The Emperor breakfasted with him, spoke of affairs and issued various orders to him and to the Commandant of the place.² After an hour³ we started again, in a landau that M. de Saint-Aignan had caused to be fitted up so that the Emperor could lie at full length in it. His Majesty was delighted with this, and several times said that a good carriage, at the end of a long journey, gave greater pleasure than a comfortable bed after three months under canvas. He made me get rid of the Saxon gendarme who had been on the seat behind us since we had left Dresden,⁴ and we took a French one in his place.

When we reached Eisenach⁵ the horses were not ready, although it was more than two hours since they had been ordered. Tired of waiting in the carriage, after half an hour the Emperor alighted and entered the posting-house to warm himself and chat with the postmistress, a very pretty young woman.⁶ Her husband made us the deepest of bows, but

¹ Saint-Aignan reported to Maret in the following terms (*Archives des affaires étrangères, Correspondance politique Saxe, Maisons duciales*, II, 136, Weimar, December 15, 1812): "The Emperor passed through Weimar this morning at nine o'clock. He was perfectly well and not suffered either from fatigue of the journey nor from the cold of 15° to 20°, which has been felt in this country for some days past. His Majesty had left Dresden on the 14th, at nine o'clock in the morning, in one of the King of Saxony's carriages mounted on a sledge. At ten leagues from here the sledge broke down. His Majesty continued his journey in a post-chaise as far as Erfurt, where I had scarcely time to reach, according to his orders, in order to get a carriage ready for him to continue his journey. No one at Weimar was aware of His Majesty passing through the town, but at Erfurt he was recognized and the news of his arrival instantly spread throughout the place."

² After the battle of Jena, Erfurt had been given a French administration.

³ Still December 15th.

⁴ Put at the Emperor's disposal by the King of Saxony.

⁵ Beyond Gotha, on the road from Erfurt to Frankfort. Bourgoing, who narrates part of this scene, on the authority of Wonsowicz, places it a little farther on, at Vach, a small town in the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 89.)

⁶ "The Emperor and his suite had stopped for luncheon at this little town (Vach, according to Bourgoing). Going into the postmaster's room they found

without putting himself to the trouble of setting us on our way. Seeing that the horses he said he had requisitioned from the inhabitants did not appear and that my repeated demands evoked nothing but "Gleich" (immediately), it was clear that nightfall would find us in the difficult defiles of the mountain and forest, so I left the Emperor and went out to make inquiries. All I could learn was that the horses ought to appear. My mind was filled with the idea that perhaps it was known that the traveller was none other than the Emperor, that they were deliberately delaying us until nightfall with the intention of setting an ambuscade. I was surprised, moreover, that a post-house which I knew to be so well supplied with relays should have to requisition horses, when they had been warned in advance of our coming, especially as we had met no travellers on the road who might have taken horses before we arrived; so I was anxious to speak to someone and assure myself that there really were no post-horses. I went into the courtyard to find out why the horses requisitioned in the town had not come, and talked to a postilion as my eyes wandered round looking for the stables. I inquired whether the postmaster had no horses. He stealthily pointed with his finger to the stables, which were closed. I tapped on the door softly, saying in German "Mach auf" (open!). Taking me, from the voice, to be somebody of the house, a postilion opened the door immediately. I found ten excellent horses, which were being reserved, no doubt, for some better occasion. As soon as they saw me in the stable all the postilions ran up. I ordered them to harness the horses and put them to the carriage. At this they tried to make off, but I stopped them and called to the gendarme, whom I saw beneath the archway, to hold the others. Warned by one of the postilions, the postmaster hastened up and forbade his horses to be used. Upon this a great turmoil ensued. The best reasons in the world failed to move him, and as the postilions dared not disobey him I grabbed him by the collar and forced him into a young woman of remarkable beauty who, seated at a harpsichord, was playing an old sonata with extraordinary brilliance. . . . As the pretty postmistress spoke no French, while her august admirer did not know a word of German, the conversation could not progress far. (*Bourgoing, Itinéraire*, 89.)

STRANGE SCENE WITH THE POSTMASTER

a corner of the stable, ordering him to have the horses put to instantly. As he persisted and I perceived that the noise occasioned by our struggle had already attracted a small crowd, also that the gendarme was finding some difficulty in detaining the postilions, who were trying to make their escape, I drew my sword and presented the point to the postmaster, telling him if anyone came in from outside or made a movement, or if the horses were not harnessed in five minutes' time, I would run him through the body. This argument, thanks to the sword-point which made him understand that I was a man of my word, proved as irresistible to him as to his postilions. The horses were put to in the twinkling of an eye. One of the postmaster's friends, who called himself a counsellor of the Duke,¹ appeared on the scene and at the beginning of the discussion was inclined to take his part, but I bade him mind his own business and give his friend the best advice he could, so curtly that he went off without another word. At sight of their horses being led out, the postmaster's wife appeared and, learning what had happened, ran in tears to the Emperor, stammering in broken French that her husband was being ill-treated.² The Emperor came up just as the last horses were being led across the courtyard. I followed them with the postmaster, to whom the Emperor handed over his loving wife, telling them that they had done wrong to treat travellers in such a manner.³

We hastened to get away, and were never so well served. The postilion, whom I questioned on the road, confessed that the postmaster nearly always made use of requisitioned horses

¹ The Duke of Saxe-Weimar, in whose State are the towns of Eisenach and Vach.

² "The postmistress, hearing her husband's shouts of anger and alarm, besought the Emperor, of whose identity she was not in the least aware, to stop the tumult. He then had the idea to offer her his arm and take her with him to the infuriated crowd." (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 91.)

³ Following the story of Wonsowicz, Bourgoing says: "It was simply a question of a refusal to supply tired horses, or some similar cause of quarrel with the postilions." According to the same author, the scene was terminated by the appearance of armed force: "This armed force was nothing more than a detachment of *gendarmes*, for at that time there was a patrol of French *gendarmes* at all the towns along the road by which our troops were in the habit of passing." (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 92.)

when the roads were bad; and said that, so far as that went, no traveller had been through for thirty-six hours. I could not find out from him whether the requisitioned horses had really been sent for; all I knew was that the orderly had been two hours ahead of us, and that we had been obliged to wait even longer. The Emperor did not know what to make of the postmaster's behaviour. The delay had startled him, and we remained on the alert all night.¹ Never, I think, was I so glad to see day break, for never had the Emperor been in any situation that worried me more. It was bitterly cold. We travelled rapidly, despite the badness of the Westphalian roads. A clumsy postilion managed to snap the carriage-pole, but a couple of straps sufficed to mend it and we lost no more than half an hour. The Emperor stopped at Hanau² and sent for M. d'Albini, Minister of the Prince-Bishop,³ to whom he talked while at his breakfast.⁴ This gentleman was not a little surprised to see His Majesty, especially with such a modest suite.

I was never quick enough for the Emperor in opening the despatch-boxes brought by the couriers whom we met one after the other. The Empress's letters were always the first he demanded. He never named her without speaking in her praise, without exhibiting emotion when mentioning her and his son. After the Empress's letter he invariably asked for Madame de Montesquiou's, then the despatches from the Minister of Police, the Arch-Chancellor, the post packet, the Minister of War's despatch, and then those from the other Ministers. He went over the letters and ministerial despatches in the same order and made me read them. He seemed content with the state of public opinion, but awaited with impatience the despatches with news of the effect produced by the direful bulletin. The hope of reaching Mayence in a few hours

¹ Night of December 15th-16th.

² Hanau, near the Main, was part of the Grand Duchy of Frankfort which Napoleon had created in 1806 for M. de Dalberg, Prince-Bishop of the Rhine Confederation.

³ François Joseph Martin, Chevalier d'Albini, Count of the Empire in 1810, born at Saint-Goar on the Rhine, May 14, 1748, died at Diesberg, January 8, 1816, Minister-Secretary of State of the Grand Duchy of Frankfort.

⁴ December 16th.

cheered him above all else; so we urged the postilion on more than ever.

A league before reaching the Rhine we met M. Anatole de Montesquiou,¹ whom I had sent forward from Molodetchna. He was on his way back from Paris, where he had stayed but a few hours. The news he had carried thither would have prepared the public for the bulletin. He brought news of the Empress, and was, I think, very agreeably surprised to meet the Emperor and thus have his own journeyings brought to so speedy a conclusion. His Majesty asked him about the Empress and his son, and then started him off at once for Paris with news of us. But we met him again on the banks of the Rhine which, by reason of the floating ice, had to be crossed by boat.² Thereafter he followed us.

When we had reached the farther side the Emperor went on foot to the post-house while his carriage was being ferried over and disembarked. I never remember seeing the Emperor so light-hearted. Setting foot once more on French soil³ made him forget all his weariness and, for a moment, maybe, his misfortunes. When he reached the posting-house the post-master recognized him. The Duke of Valmy, for whom he sent and to whom he talked while the horses were being harnessed

¹ See above, p. 402: "M. de Montesquiou, who had been sent off from Molodetchna to Paris, arrived there on the 15th, and after receiving his orders from the Empress, started back in a few hours' time. To his great astonishment he met the Emperor a league beyond Mayence." (Norvins, *Portefeuille de 1813*, I, 26.)

² "The Master of the Horse had sent in advance a groom from the Emperor's household to procure a boat for crossing the Rhine, for at that season of the year the bridge of boats had been removed. The groom did not give his orders in the Emperor's name, but in that of the Duke of Vicenza. On the river-bank at Cassel, a little town facing Mayence, this groom met a young orderly officer, Count Anatole de Montesquiou, who would not give up the boat he had already reserved. At this moment the Emperor himself appeared, though unobserved, for it was pitch dark, and taking Montesquiou affectionately by the hand, he said, 'Come, come, don't get cross; we can go over together.'" (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 93.) Bourgoing was wrong in thinking that Napoleon caught up Montesquiou going from Molodetchna to Paris.

³ Having crossed the Rhine the Emperor was in Mayence, at that time the capital of the Department of Mont-Tonnerre. Bourgoing says he put up at the Hôtel de la Poste, where he arrived on December 16th, at ten o'clock in the evening. The *Journal des Débats* of December 22, 1812, says that he passed through Mayence between three and four in the afternoon, which is more in agreement with Caulaincourt's account, as the latter fixes their departure from the town at before seven o'clock.

up, could not believe his own eyes.¹ We were on the road again before seven o'clock. Fagalde, who had been sent by way of Gumbinnen and had rejoined us at Glogau, had acted as courier² together with Amodru after we left Dresden, and they continued their duties now that we were in France.

Fresh despatches from Paris led the conversation to the Malet affair and elicited from the Emperor several observations that, at the risk of repetition, seemed to me worth recording.

"Observe," said the Emperor, "how the revolutionary government has destroyed all ideas of order and stability. There is still much for me to do towards re-establishing social order."

"Peace is the only means of attaining this," I said; "it is the first condition for stability, for war is a lottery that engenders a state of uncertainty of the future that is injurious to everything."

"You are right," he replied, "but peace cannot be made just when we want it. With England refusing to come to any terms we have been obliged to take steps to force her."

Reverting to the Malet affair, he continued:

"When my death was announced, not one of those soldiers or officials gave a single thought to my son. The idea of the King of Rome did not even occur to Frochot. It seemed to him simpler to have a fresh revolution than to maintain the established order of things. But when I get to Paris everyone will boast of their devotion to me, and Frochot with the rest of them if I admit him to my presence. An example must be made, for fidelity is a more sacred duty perhaps in a magistrate than in a soldier, who has only to obey the orders he receives without questioning them. Errors committed by magistrates are serious matters, for they are expected to set an example. How blind men are, even where their own interests are concerned! Could Rabbe or Frochot or Soulier hope for more

¹ Kellermann, who was then seventy-five years of age, had been in command of the 25th and 26th Military Divisions since April 17, 1812, with his headquarters at Mayence. That evening the Duke of Valmy was giving a grand ball. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 95.)

² The original meaning of the word "Courier" is apt to be forgotten. In the days of the diligences it was applied to the man who went ahead to prepare the changes of horses and see to the travellers' accommodation.

from Malet, from any sort of revolution whatsoever, than I have given them, for more than they would have got from the King of Rome if they had remained loyal to him? Habituation to change, and revolutionary ideas, have left very deep traces. A strong hand like mine was needed, and a man who knows the French as I know them, to have done as much as has already been accomplished. France needs me for another ten years. If I were to die, there would be general chaos; every throne would collapse if my son's collapsed, for I perceive that what I have hitherto done is as yet but insecurely established."

"Our institutions and organisations are not completed," I said. "All the powerful interests of the country must be enlisted for the preservation of the existing——"

The Emperor interrupted me briskly, before I had time to finish my sentence. "You need a peerage, an aristocracy adapted to the time we live in; but with the fickleness of this nation and the pretensions of the Generals it will be a good ten years before those new institutions will exercise sufficient influence. If there were more talent among the army commanders, they would be like Cæsar's lieutenants and divide the world between themselves: but none has the genius necessary to accomplish a revolution so great as this, though it might save you in the event of my dying. For the rest, the best guarantee against private ambitions lies in the character of the French, in the composition of the army. The day they thought they were only being used to serve one man's private interests these sons of citizens would desert in a body. To-day they all march and remain with the colours because it is to the interest of France to obtain peace even by force of arms. If it was a question of going abroad to fight for some individual cause, not a man would stand by those colours. The danger does not lie there, but in the intrigues carried on in Paris by so many generals. When Soult dreamed of making himself Viceroy or King of Portugal he had everyone against him, for the intrigues of the Generals who wanted to leave the country had aroused the suspicion of the rank and file.¹ They were

¹ Soult was given command of the 2nd Corps of the Army of Spain in June 1808. In February 1809 he invaded Portugal and penetrated as far as Oporto,

almost worked up to mutiny,¹ more, I have always thought, through the intrigues of Loison and several others who were afraid of being captured in Portugal with their booty, than because they believed in Soult's improbable project of wearing a crown. The leaders seized on this pretext to force the Marshal to leave Portugal. Loison yielded the bridge of Amarante.² The mass of the men, who believed what it was desired they should believe, would not dream of fighting until they saw that the King was leaving his country. The fact is that if Soult had proclaimed himself king or declared his independence, the army would have abandoned him, and 'King Nicholas'³ would have been left with his Portuguese Court.

"If I were to die, the danger would lie in the weakness of the regency and the intrigues of the Generals, who want all the interest, all the places, and especially all the money. You would not pull through, particularly if you failed to take immediate steps to decrease the numbers of the Guard. Observe that I, myself, have not put all arms of that service under the same commander.⁴ A very firm will is needed to keep the Guard in hand.

"Malet is a lunatic. He must be, if he believed he could overturn a government just by suspending the activities of the police and hoodwinking some senior officers and a prefect for a matter of three hours, when there was an army of two hundred thousand men abroad and he had not one accomplice in high office nor in the provinces. He is a man who wanted to get himself shot by being talked about, but his action has proved

which he captured on March 29th. In April the idea was conceived in Oporto of making Soult king of Northern Lusitania, but the approach of the British Army under Wellesley caused the retreat of the French, who marched out of Oporto on May 12th and quickly crossed the frontier.

¹ "The notion of making Marshal Soult king of Portugal soon gained ground in Oporto and the towns of Estremadura and Minho, though it was ridiculed by intelligent people and greeted with insulting jests by the army." (Thiers, XI, 72.)

² This incident occurred on May 12, 1809, the same day that Marshal Soult evacuated Oporto. General Loison, in the presence of superior numbers who threatened his position, did not consider himself strong enough to force the passage of the Tamega. He accordingly evacuated the road to Amarante and freed the road to Braganza for the English.

³ This was the name Soult intended to take had he ascended the throne. His baptismal names were Nicolas Jean-de-Dieu.

⁴ There were four Generals in command of the various arms of the Guard.

conclusively what I partly suspected—that no great faith can be put in mankind. The men of the old regime were unruly and factious. They rose in revolt when they dared, but they would not permit an underling to rebel and they were faithful to their oath. The notions of monarchy and hereditary titles, as well as the desire to preserve the existing order of things, belong to a new language which is to be learned by the rising generation, but they will never be in the dictionary of the men of to-day. They have already forgotten the misfortunes of the Revolution.

“Clarke boasts of his devotion, of what he did and the orders he gave, possibly after the event; but he did not even put on his boots to go to the nearest barracks and assure himself of the troops. Only Hulin showed any courage, only Laborde any presence of mind. Savary fell into the trap. He maintained that it was no conspiracy, that Malet was solely responsible for the conception and execution of the whole scheme, that Lahorie and even Guidal knew of Malet’s plans only when he took them out of prison. Clarke, on the contrary, thought the plot had ramifications in the Senate and compromised some prominent people. He saw Jacobins everywhere. We will see who is right. To ensure that the thing shall be unravelled I have not even changed the Minister of Police; for he is more concerned than anyone else in repairing the harm brought about by his lack of foresight. Savary clings to his ministry and the salary. He is afraid of losing his post, although, so far as that goes, he no longer needs it, as I have given him plenty of money. He has at least five or six millions. Whether as aide-de-camp or as cabinet minister, he was always asking me for money, and this displeased me. Not that he was alone in this, for never did Ney or Oudinot or many others open or finish a campaign without coming to me for cash. Savary had no fortune; he has children and an extravagant wife. I must, however, do him the justice to say that he serves me with zeal. He has a fine appearance, and this is essential in Paris. His squabbles with Maret weary me. They are always at war with one another. I do not like this bickering; they are jealous of each other. Savary thinks that I prefer Maret to himself. Do you know who set them against one another?”

"I do not know at all."

"Probably women; they would embroil empires. My other Ministers never bother me on that score. They understand one another and do not weary me with their petty jealousies or dislikes. Sometimes I have wanted to get Cambacérès married, but, when all is said and done, it would have been a nuisance.¹ Women have pretensions, and the wives of functionaries have always been a nuisance at Court. One does not know where to rank them, nor what precedence to give them when there are foreign ladies present.

"Poor Savary is not treated well by the Paris correspondents. Everyone ridicules him. It is always a stroke of luck for conspirators when a Minister of Police gets the worst of it, though another comes to take his place. Savary's fall appears certain, and it seems as if everyone wants the honour of dealing him the first blow."

"That is one reason, Sire, why you should stand up for him and keep him; for, as you say, he will now do better than another. If there has been no conspiracy, if Malet is the sole author of this folly, Savary is justified."

"You are right, but I can scarcely believe it is so. Savary is the dupe of some conspirators who have blinded his eyes, or this would have slipped out to Pasquier, who is a good observer. We shall know all about it—tell me, in how many hours?"

"In forty-four hours, Sire."

"I say in thirty-six."

Upon this the Emperor made me relight the candle, and set to work reckoning alternately by the map and the road-book how many hours it would take us. After disputing about minutes, as if it lay with me to prolong our journey, he then spoke of his anticipated joy at seeing the Empress and his son, and then begin to tease me about the eight hours that he was obliged to add to his calculations, which he spent a couple of hours in going over again. Each stage, each quarter of a stage, each quarter of an hour, each minute was reckoned up. Our inevitable halts, our moments of rest, all were curtailed; the difficulties and delays of the road were whittled down to a

¹ The Arch-Chancellor, Duke of Parma, died unmarried.

minimum. The Emperor forgot Malet, the police, all his troubles. By daylight, his expression showed me that he was already dreaming of the Tuileries, where I was as anxious to see him safely installed as he was to be there. He seemed so confident and happy that for me, also, this was one of the pleasantest moments of our journey.

The following day the Emperor supped at Verdun.¹ Having resumed a wheeled carriage at Erfurt, we had to stop twice a day to grease the axles, and we took advantage of this forced delay to partake of some food. After leaving Dresden the Emperor spoke of nothing but Paris, of the Empress's surprise at seeing him, of how everyone would be astonished. From Frankfort² onwards he calculated the hour of his arrival in Paris, and at each stage confirmed his certainty of reaching there before midnight, if nothing delayed us. The more frequently he met the couriers, the more avid he was for details. He was more satisfied than he had expected to be with the attitude of public opinion, and with its reception of the news of our retreat from Moscow, coupled with the interruption of all communications, but he was much concerned with the effect the bulletin would have caused, and was surprised at getting no news of it, especially as M. de Montesquieu, who preceded his messenger, had rejoined us. Judging by private correspondence, every family was too occupied with its individual relatives in Russia to pay great attention to public affairs. It was not thought that there could have been a battle; the Russians were supposed to be in no condition to fight. This opinion made any disquietude less likely. Our disasters were entirely ignored. As we subsequently learned, it had not been possible to publish the famous bulletin which depicted them so tragically until the 16th, two days later than the Emperor thought.

This delay annoyed the Emperor, who would have liked the

¹ December 17th. Passing Verdun, December 30, 1812, Castellane writes in his *Journal* (I, 218): "We took our midday meal at Verdun in the same inn where His Majesty had stopped. The maid told us that she had talked to the Emperor without knowing who he was." Napoleon had breakfasted at Saint-Avoid. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 98.)

² Napoleon passed Frankfort-on-Main on his way from Hanau to Mayence.

publication to have preceded his arrival by some days. He had travelled more rapidly than he thought. Habitually so calm and impassive, His Majesty was now agitated by so many diverse emotions, regrets and hopes; he had such happiness before him and had left such misery behind that he could not hide his feelings. After talking for some considerable time about the various things that filled his mind, he returned for the third time to our adventure at Eisenach. He could not understand the behaviour of the postmaster, who had been warned a long time in advance, and knew that the horses were for a distinguished traveller. The place, the hour, everything rendered his conduct suspicious. The Emperor ordered me to write to M. de Saint-Aignan, instructing him to obtain precise information regarding the motives for the man's behaviour, and to complain to the government if necessary. M. de Saint-Aignan was to make his report at once.¹

"As it is a personal matter," added the Emperor, "I do not wish the postmaster to be arrested now, nor to be dismissed. But it would be satisfactory to know there was no intrigue at the back of it."

The army and Poland furnished inexhaustible topics of conversation. Two army couriers, with news of the happenings during the sixty hours that succeeded our departure, reached us one after the other. The King of Naples and Berthier reported that the rout continued; the intensity of the cold had caused many to desert the colours, even many of the Guard, but there was nothing to prepare us, nothing even that ought to have made us foresee the events that were to follow. The Emperor was well aware that his departure would have increased the disorder to some extent, and that it would affect the Guard more than the other corps, but as Wilna was the goal that everyone was striving for, it mattered little to him whether the men reached there singly or with their units. As the issue of rations and clothing were only to be made to men with the colours, he appeared certain of being able to rally the army. His despatches confirmed him more than ever in the

¹ Saint-Aignan's report on this matter is not to be found in the *Archives des Affaires étrangères, correspondance politique, Saxe, maisons duciales*.

opinion that the army would hold Wilna. It was in vain that I combated this view. He jested and laughed at my arguments, which he called misgivings.

"You see everthing in black colours," he said.

Nothing but the actual outcome of events was able to undeceive him. At that moment he was more than ever filled with hopes. To find himself back in France seemed to signalize the return of his good fortune. He had a presentiment that his Star was again in the ascendant, and, certain of being able to control events, he could think no more about the disasters which, forty hours previously, he had been able to foresee as clearly as I did.

At Harville¹ we overtook Fagalde, one of the grooms, who had not been able to get beyond Mars-le-Tour. At Saint-Jean² the front axle-tree of our carriage broke, some five hundred paces from the post-house. The Emperor took his place beside me in a little open cabriolet which had served for the courier who had followed us. We had to give up our heavy cloaks, as there was no room for them. Since leaving Fulda we had noticed a great difference in the temperature. It was in this vehicle that we drove into Meaux. Only Amodru had remained with us and he still had the energy to ride ahead of us and order horses, though we were speeding on like travellers of the infernal regions. The Emperor had been recognized at Mayence; the postilions told everyone who he was; but the postmasters would only believe it when they saw him for themselves. As for the postilions, they whirled us onward like men certain in advance of the napoleon that I was to give to each. It is impossible to give any idea of the eagerness exhibited by the stable-hands and postmaster immediately on our arrival at the beginning of a stage when they heard from the men who had brought us that it was the Emperor himself and not merely the Master of the Horse, as our advance

¹ This should undoubtedly read "Before reaching Harville," for that place lies between Mars-la-Tour and Verdun.

² At Saint-Jean-les-Deux-Jumeaux, between La Ferté-sous-Jouarre and Meaux (December 18th). That same day the Emperor dined at Château-Thierry, making his toilet and putting on the uniform of the Grenadier Footguards, though he retained his fur cloak and hat. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 99.)

courier had announced. From leaving Metz onward we thought we had come into spring, the ice had given place to horrible mud. At Meaux¹ the postmaster gave us his own chaise that closed properly and took us right to the Tuileries. Since leaving Claye poor Amodru, overcome by drowsiness rather than by fatigue, kept on swaying in the saddle, and I had to encourage him every moment. At the sound of my voice he would wake up with renewed energy. At last the moment arrived when he was to ride ahead into the courtyard and hand us out at the door of the Tuileries.

¹ "Yet another accident to the carriage—and in the course of such a rapid journey this was bound to be a frequent happening—forced the Emperor to travel on to Paris in one of those cumbersome vehicles, mounted on two enormous wheels and with shafts of the old pattern, which for the last two hundred years have been known as post-chaises. It was in this hideous carriage that the Emperor was obliged to make his entry into his capital." (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 99.) Cf. also Roustam, *Souvenirs*, *Revue rétrospective*, VIII, 159.)

CHAPTER X

ARRIVAL IN PARIS

THE postilion had received no instructions but he bore us through the Arc de Triomphe¹ at full gallop before any of the sentinels had time to stop him.

"That is a good omen," said the Emperor.

He alighted safe and sound at the central entrance of the Tuileries just as the clock was striking the last quarter before midnight.² I had unbuttoned my overcoat in such a manner as to display the facings of my uniform. Taking us for officers bearing despatches the sentries let us pass and we made our way to the entrance to the gallery that opens on to the garden.³ The Swiss porter had gone to bed, but lamp in hand and dressed only in his shirt he came to see who was knocking. We cut such odd figures that he summoned his wife. I had to assert my identity several times before either of them could be persuaded to open the door, for it was not without considerable difficulty and much rubbing of eyes that he and his wife, who held the lamp beneath my very nose, were eventually able to recognize me. The woman opened

¹ The roadway beneath the Arc de Triomphe was reserved for the Emperor's carriage.

² Bourgoing (*Souvenirs militaires*, 212) says at half-past one in the morning (December 18); but it seems certain that Caulaincourt was right in saying a quarter to twelve.

³ Passing through the great gateway of the Pavilion de l'Horloge, the travellers found themselves in the peristyle of the entrance, beneath the roof of which carriages could not pass at that time. At the lower end of this vestibule, on the left, a door opened into an uncovered passage that led to the garden, formed of the arcade that had been built by Catherine de Medici. (By closing the arches Louis Philippe turned this arcade into a series of rooms.) In 1812 the Empress's apartments were on the ground-floor and opened on to the garden in the portion comprised between the Pavilion de l'Horloge and the Pavilion de Flore. They were reached either by the door called The Apartment Door, in the Pavilion de Flore, or by a door at the end of the open gallery. It was at this last-mentioned door that the Emperor and Caulaincourt knocked. (Cf. G. Lenotre, *Les Tuileries*, 280.)

the door while he went off to summon one of the footmen on duty. The Empress had only just gone to bed.¹ In pursuance of the plan we had agreed upon, I caused myself to be conducted to the apartments of her ladies-in-waiting, ostensibly with news of the Emperor, who was supposed to be following after me. While these various confabulations were going on, the Swiss and several others who had gathered round were eyeing His Majesty from head to foot. Suddenly one of them cried: "It is the Emperor!"

Their delight was indescribable: they could not contain themselves for joy. The Empress's two waiting-women were coming out of her room at the very moment that I was shown into theirs. My fortnight's growth of beard, my dress and heavy fur-lined boots created no better impression here than they had done on the Swiss, for I had to insist that I was the bearer of good news from the Emperor before I could prevent their running away for safety from the spectre-like creature before them. Mention of the Emperor's name at last served to reassure them and assist their recognition of me. One of them went to announce me to her Majesty.

In the meantime the Emperor, who was barely able to conceal his impatience, brought my embassy to an abrupt end by going in to the Empress without further ado, remarking: "Good night, Caulaincourt. Like me, you are in need of rest."²

In accordance with the Emperor's orders I went at once to the Arch-Chancellor,³ who was far from expecting that his nightly despatch would have reached its destination so speedily. Had it not been that I drove up in a post-chaise and was

¹ The Empress had gone to bed at half-past eleven. Cf. F. Masson, *L'Impératrice Marie-Louise*, 416.

² There are notable discrepancies between this account of Napoleon's arrival in Paris and those that have been published elsewhere. Caulaincourt was the only ocular witness to accompany Napoleon from the Arc de Triomphe as far as the door of the Empress's apartments, and he has the greatest claims to authenticity in his facts. It would seem, therefore, that his account should be taken as correct. Madame Durand's narrative (*Mémoires*, 156), which was referred to by Masson, cannot be placed against Caulaincourt's testimony, for that lady was not on duty that night and took no part in the scenes she describes.

³ Cambacérès lived at 56 Rue St. Dominique, now 246 Boulevard Saint Germain (Office of the Ministry of Public Works).

accompanied by a liveried footman from the Palace, and had not the postilion's whip served as my passport, I should have had difficulty in gaining access to the Arch-Chancellor. My face was certainly not my fortune. I had to be vouched for by the Court footman who accompanied me, for the Prince's people really did not know what to make of the strange creature whom no one recognized or wished to announce to the Arch-Chancellor. M. Jaubert, of the Bank of France,¹ and some other persons who happened to be in the Prince's salon, seemed petrified at the apparition. Everyone stared at me speechlessly. No one knew what to make of my arrival or of my face, which seemed in no way to correspond with the name that had been announced. The momentary impression created by my strange costume and unshaven appearance was instantly accompanied in everyone's mind by the reflection "Where is the Emperor? What is the news? Has there been some disaster?"

These questions were asked by all present, though almost inarticulately. The disastrous Bulletin had already appeared and people had not awakened that morning to pleasant impressions. The atmosphere was depressing. No one knew that the Emperor was in Paris: so why was the Master of the Horse there? Why had he left his Majesty? The late hour, the wan light of a solitary lamp, the prevailing state of uncertainty, the sad details which were already known, and the yet worse news that was momentarily expected, all these elements tended to intensify the general depression and arouse presentiments of the gloomiest nature. Such was the state of mind of those in the salon while I stood waiting for the return of the valet who had gone in to announce me to the Prince. I cannot describe the scene. Everyone stared at me, unable to utter a word, each expecting to read his fate in my eyes: the general expression was one rather of fear than of hope.

¹ Count François Jaubert, born at Condon, October 3, 1758, died in Paris, March 17, 1822, at one time President of the Tribunal, was appointed Governor of the Bank of France, August 9, 1807, and occupied that post until the First Restoration. During the Hundred Days he was Director-General of Indirect Taxation.

I directed my observations to M. Jaubert who, as soon as he had in some measure recovered from his first astonishment, cried:

“And the Emperor, Monsier le Duc——?”

He was unable to conclude his sentence. His words were taken up by all present, who repeated in tones of consternation: “The Emperor? Where is he?”

“In Paris,” I replied.

At these words there was a general smile of derision while I entered the Prince’s apartment. The first word he uttered was identical to what I had just heard and I did not wait for him to finish the sentence before reassuring him. I transmitted the Emperor’s orders and stayed chatting for some moments, instructing him to have the guns at daybreak announce his Majesty’s return, and to inform the ministers, as well as the Imperial Court, that a levee would be held at 11 o’clock.

As soon as I got to my own house¹ I gave instructions that a page should be sent to Madame Mère and each of the Princesses at 8 o’clock with news of the Emperor’s arrival. I wrote to the Grand Chamberlain² telling him to see to the palace service. Count de Montesquiou came to me at once, as well as the Minister of Police whom I had just sent for. M. Anatole de Montesquiou had not been able to follow us.

The next day the Emperor ordered me to take over the portfolio of Foreign Affairs in the absence of the Duke of Bassano, and to bring him portions of the correspondence with Vienna as well as the last treaties with Austria and Prussia. Exhausted by the fourteen nights that I had just spent on the alert, without so much as closing an eye, in a manner overwhelmed by the feeling of responsibility that a journey, made in such circumstances, had entailed upon me, and still unable

¹ The Master of the Horse had official apartments in the Hôtel de Longueville, Rue Saint-Nicaise (on the site now occupied by the statue to Gambetta) in the Place du Carrousel.

² Count Anne Elizabeth Pierre de Montesquiou-Fezensac, born at Paris, September 30, 1764, died at Besse-sur-Braye (Sarthe), August 4, 1834, formerly first equerry to the Count of Provence, had been appointed Grand Chamberlain in 1810, after Talleyrand’s disgrace. He was the father of Anatole de Montesquiou and husband of the King of Rome’s governess.

to shake off the feeling of apprehension lest something should happen to the Emperor whose safety had been confided to my care and honour, my nerves were in such a state of tension that I was in imperative need of rest. I accordingly besought the Emperor to excuse me from this task and to hand it over to M. de la Besnardière.¹ To this he consented.

I cannot describe the relief I experienced when I had the happiness to hand the Emperor from his post-chaise at the steps of the Tuileries. Never in my life have I felt a sense of satisfaction and content like to that which overcame me at seeing him safe and sound in his own palace.

I returned to the Tuileries for the levee at 11 o'clock [December 19]. The ministers and a great number of Household officials, especially chamberlains, were in attendance. As soon as I appeared they gathered round me and treated me as a favoured person, one who for fourteen days and nights had been *tête-à-tête* with the fountain-head of power.

The fateful Bulletin had appeared in the *Moniteur* of the 16th. We had received news of this by the last courier we had met on our way to Paris. The Bulletin had produced such a vivid impression, even upon the most case-hardened courtiers, that they searched my face eagerly for any news of those in the army who might be dear to them. None dared ask me a question. Only the Bulletin itself had arrived; no private letter had been delivered. It was my good fortune to be able to ease a good many minds; but, alas, there were many others whom I had to wound, though the disorder and confusion that had prevailed in the whole army since Malo-Jaroslawetz made it impossible for headquarters staff to furnish information about many officers, even senior officers, who, having lost their mounts and being in actual want, were driven to the necessity of seeking subsistence by following the bands of marauders who battered on the flanks of the columns, sometimes in front, sometimes at the rear. Men of the most resolute nature were reduced to this cruel necessity, for even

¹ Jean Baptiste de Gouey de la Besnardière, born at Périers (Manche) on October 1, 1765, died April 30, 1843, clerk to the Foreign Office in 1786 and since 1807 Chief of the Division of Political Affairs in that Ministry.

previous to the Beresina, a handful of gold would have been valueless to procure a crust of bread.

For the most part these unfortunate wanderers kept themselves alive on the flesh of horses that had fallen by the wayside. They did not even wait to slaughter these poor beasts before dismembering them! As soon as one stumbled and fell it was fallen upon by famishing men, and sometimes its master was hard put to it to defend it from their attack. The firstcomers slashed at the animal's rump; those who were smart enough ripped open its belly and tore out the liver, as being the tenderest and most edible portion. All this was done without so much as a thought of waiting to slaughter the poor beast, so great was men's haste to be on the road again. The luckiest among these waifs made themselves a sort of porridge, if such a term can be applied to filthy flour, that was often nothing but the bran swept up with the dirt of the granary floor and diluted to a wash with water. Lucky the man who had contrived to keep any sort of cooking vessel! He marched with it in his hand and clung to it more tenaciously than to his money; and as even in the midst of our miseries we had to have our laugh, we used to call the men who marched saucepan in hand "guzzlers," and even those who were trudging on with an empty stomach would amuse themselves at the expense of those who had the foresight to retain these necessary culinary articles. If one of them came up to a fire to cook his *potage*, those who had no cooking vessel fell into line behind him, to take a turn at the saucepan. Anyone who found a few potatoes was an object of universal envy.

Once Poland could be reached the large estates would be certain to offer copious supplies, but they were far away and a considerable distance apart, and no one wanted to get too far away from the road. Master and servant suffered alike, the colonel as much as his servant.

This overwhelming distress had confused all sense of rank, and need had reduced all men to a common level; indeed, the greatest sufferer was he whose rank forbade his setting an example in pillaging. Yet honour, a thousand times over, to

our French soldiers, to their exhibition of our national character of innate generosity! How often did these unfortunate fellows, who had braved death a thousand times to procure even the most miserable means of subsistence and who had no hopes whatever of finding anything to eat on the morrow, even after braving once again the squads of Cossacks and malevolent peasants—how often would they give or share their meagre repast with some poor wretch whom they encountered on the roadside, waiting for death to relieve his hunger or sickness! How often would they stop, at risk of being killed or made prisoner, to succour some straggler and help him on his way! How many officers, who felt a repugnance to leave the columns although their regiments had vanished, chose to die in sight of their colours and on the line of march rather than seek their nourishment in the ranks of the stragglers and pillagers! How many officers, let me add, were aided and fed by those same pillagers! It was rarely that a soldier who had procured some means of subsistence passed an officer who appeared to be in need without offering him some food, although he neither knew him nor belonged to his corps. Innumerable times I have myself witnessed kindnesses such as these.

March as I did on foot, in the centre of the army, wrapped simply in a blue great-coat and wearing a plain-bordered cap, I often used to sit down for a while by the roadside to rest. Well! Never a day passed but what some soldier or other, marching along with a horse grill, some potatoes tied up in a tattered neckerchief, or some gruel in a saucepan, would offer me a share, seeing me wearied or apparently in need of food to enable me to march. If I could but come across some of those gallant lads once more! Honour a thousand times over to the Frenchmen, of whom the great majority were full of compassion in the midst of their greatest distress. If hunger, the most imperative of all forms of need, and the near proximity of death, sometimes rendered men deaf to the supplications and distress of their equals, on how many occasions did soldiers and servants brave all to go and seek food for their officers or their masters! All honour to the

nation that could produce such men and to the army that can boast such soldiers! And shame to the scoundrels and disloyal Frenchmen who in any way tarnished a glory so valiantly acquired, a name more precious than any wreath of laurels, which will be the envy of our descendants as it has long been the envy of a Europe that has never been able to defeat us!

This aspect of the French character, the indifference to want in the midst of the greatest privations, the scorn of death when there was the slightest chance of even a reflection of glory, recalls to my mind the action of a light-infantryman at the camp of Boulogne. As the Emperor was reviewing the regiment this man presented arms and advanced from the ranks, as if he had some request to make.

"What do you want?" asked the Emperor.

"Wait a moment, General," replied the man, as he pulled down his knapsack.

Everyone thought he was looking for some paper, and as he did not seem to be hurrying himself, his officers told him he should have had it ready in his hand. But without getting in the least flustered he replied:

"The General won't mind waiting, for it is something I have been keeping for him a long time."

The Emperor began to laugh and told him to take his time. Officers and men alike broke out into a roar of laughter round the man while he rummaged among his dirty linen until at last he extracted a little box, black with filth. This he offered to the Emperor, saying:

"Take it, General. I have kept this burnt almond for you ever since we were at Genoa. It is the ration issued out to us one day. We had devilish empty stomachs then. Well, hungry as we were, one day I said to myself, 'You must keep to-day's issue and if ever you have the luck to meet General Bonaparte you shall give it to him.' It was no great risk, for if the Austrians had made me prisoner or killed me, they wouldn't have been able to make much of a meal of it. Now I am glad you have got it."

Officers and non-commissioned officers who had served at

Genoa under Marshal Masséna recognized the cocoa bean, the size of a small nut, as the ration issued to the troops at that time. They all bore witness to the good conduct of the light-infantryman, moreover; who, although he had been mentioned in despatches for deeds of bravery, had been ineligible for promotion because he could not read. The Emperor caused him to be given a gratuity.

To hark back to the last day of our journey, when the news we received from the army naturally turned our talk upon the current situation.

After reading the letter from the King of Naples, the Emperor observed, as if he had already had a presentiment of what would take place:

"I am afraid he will not take the necessary steps to re-organize the army. Perhaps I should have done better to bring him to Paris or let him go back to Naples. But he might not have returned to me when the campaign re-opened, and I should have felt the loss of him, with the young untrained cavalry I now have. He is attached to me, but he is ambitious and ridiculously vain. He is under the delusion that he is gifted with political talents to a superior degree, whereas he is, in fact, destitute of any such thing. The Queen has more energy in her little finger than the King has in his whole body. They are jealous of Eugène, for they have cast their eyes on the whole of Italy. The King wants to persuade the Italians that the country can have no existence nor any future except through the union of Italy under one sceptre. He is secretive towards me, but, as he is not so discreet with everyone, it all comes to my ears. If the King should outlive me he might commit any folly, but I will put things in order beforehand. It does not take long for the Frenchmen whom I have turned into kings to forget that they were born in this same France, and that even now their most honourable title is that of being a French citizen."

In this connection he mentioned his brothers and Bernadotte, giving me many details in support of what he had remarked.

He spoke of the need of revivifying the morale of the

army, of reawakening in our infantry, marching as they were in isolated bands, dying of hunger, and marauding in small parties along the roads, some sense of their glory and misfortune, to inspire them with some of their old energy.

"These men," he said, "who have quailed before no danger, must once again be embued with a sense of what they can still accomplish for their own safety and the honour of their country. Physically they are exhausted, but, although they lag behind and wander about like spectres, their old feelings could be once again aroused if an energetic leader would take them in hand and say: 'Halt, Frenchmen that you are! The Cossacks must come no farther! The time has come to conquer or to die!'"

Talking in this strain led the Emperor to reflect that this moral force and energy that enabled men to stand up to difficulties was not the heritage of everyone.

"No one," he said, "is braver on the battlefield than Murat or Ney, and no one has less power of decision than they when it comes to a question of matters of state. In general," he added, "there are very few real statesmen. I certainly possess the most capable ministers in all Europe, but it would soon be seen how far they fall short of their reputation if I no longer put the wheel in motion."

He paid a great tribute to the capability of Count Daru, and in the matter of finance mentioned Count Mollien¹ as exhibiting the clearest and most succinct views on this matter.

"Clarke," he observed, "is nothing more than an excellent head assistant; he is a good worker, and honest, but a man of mediocre abilities. He is good for his present post as I have the Ministry of War run by one of my aides-de-camp, or rather because I see to it myself. M. de Cessac,"² he went on, "is a man of integrity and, after Daru, the most suitable

¹ Count François Nicholas Mollien (1758-1850) entered the Ministry of Finances in 1778 and rose to be chief clerk. During the Consulate he was Director of the Sinking Fund Office. In 1806 he became Minister of the Treasury and occupied that post until April 3, 1814. He returned to office during the Hundred Days.

² Lacuée, Count de Cessac, was named Minister of the War Administration Office on January 3, 1810; he was replaced by Count Daru on November 20, 1813.

person to carry on the Administration of the War Office. Molé¹ is a man of character. I shall make use of him; he will take his place as chief of the Bench; if he justifies my confidence in him there I have other plans for his employment. Baron Pasquier is a man of parts; I think he has abilities out of the common and I believe him to be a man of decision. I am trying him at the Prefecture of Police, so that I can push him forward if he fulfils my expectations. But I do not like his relations with the Rémusat,² for they are schemers and money-grubbers and I have been sadly mistaken in them."

Thus did the Emperor pass in review certain councillors of state and others, though, as it was in a manner but little flattering or agreeable for them, I passed no comment. His Majesty then began to talk about his son. He asked me once more whom he could entrust with his education, adding that France, which was so rich in men of talent, was, nevertheless, poor in men of exceptional qualities when there was a question of making a choice from among them.

"Is it not a fact that you would find it very difficult, Caulaincourt, to name any particular person, even to make a selection from among those whom we have just been discussing?"

In some degree Counts Daru and Molé seemed possessed of the qualities he desired. But he reproached the former with being too free and easy, while the latter was a pedant and apt, he said, to partake too much of the manner of the old-time lawyers.³ Baron Pasquier was possessed of many most suitable qualities, though it was a pity that he had been obliged to

¹ Count Mathieu Louis Molé (1781-1855) had been appointed Master of Requests to the Council of State in 1806, Councillor of State and Director-General of Bridges and Highways in 1809. Napoleon named him Minister of Justice, November 20, 1813.

² Augustin Laurent Rémusat, successively Prefect of the Palace, First Chamberlain to the Emperor, Grand Master of the Wardrobe, and Superintendent of the Theatres of Paris, together with his wife, Claire Elizabeth Jeanne Gravier de Vergennes, Lady-in-Waiting to the Empress, had been overwhelmed with honours by the Emperor. How they repaid them can best be gathered by reading the *Mémoires* of Madame de Rémusat. Cf. Prince Napoleon, *Napoléon et ses détracteurs*, 131.

³ Count Molé was the son of Molé de Champlatreux, President of the Parlement of Paris, and of Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, both of very old parlement families.

make his entrance into administration by way of the police, good school as it was.

"Fontanes," he said, "is too much a man of letters. His appointment as head of the University was popular, especially as he proved a clever director of public instruction. Exceptional as are his gifts of oratory, he is completely destitute of any large ideas, of that far-seeing and broad-minded political outlook and administrative ability that go to make a statesman. Besides," His Majesty went on, "he has praised me so unstintingly that the public would certainly not fail to say that I had chosen my chief flatterer to be my son's governor."

He then talked about Duke Decrès.¹

"A clever and capable man," he said, "possessed, moreover, of determination and force. But his cynicism, his gruff and disagreeable manners are displeasing. He labours, besides, under the disadvantages of his early education and the crude upbringing of a seaman. He is as stubborn as you, Caulaincourt," added the Emperor. "On one occasion he as good as told me I could take his services or leave them, as I pleased; but he saw that I was the man to take him at his word, and as he greatly values his post, so he became more tractable. He is hated in the Navy, though he has rendered it great services. He has enlightened me on many points on which I held some very mistaken notions. He had an intense dislike of flotillas, and that was the cause of our disagreements. As he only took count of large ships of war I could scarcely make him perceive what I was aiming at. He grudged the money spent on building these flotillas, and he was right. Decrès has always been against my pinnaces."

The conversation then veered again to affairs in general. What the Emperor had said to me concerning the projects of the King of Naples now enabled me to speak of Rome and the Pope. I deplored the captivity of His Holiness which was creating, I said, a bad effect everywhere, although the Christian

¹ Rear-Admiral the Duke Decrès became Minister of Marine on October 3, 1801, and remained in that post until 1814, returning to it during the Hundred Days.

princes no longer took up arms in defence of the Vatican. He agreed that it was a disagreeable affair.

"By removing the Pope for a while from Rome,"¹ he said, "I thought to remove him from the sphere of evil counsels. Perhaps I should have done better to have left him there, my government in Italy being strong enough even to have kept the priests in order. Yet it was to that *coup d'état* that I owe the tranquillity that country has enjoyed for a year past. The English have never ceased to scatter money there for the purpose of revolts, or at any rate partial risings, and they have failed. If one considers the whole matter without bias, even the most timorous conscience can find in my discussions with the Pope nothing other than a political difference of opinion. As for myself, to whom the Church owes the re-establishment of religion in France—perhaps, even, its very existence in Europe—I am certainly as good a Catholic as Charles V, who also had a Pope taken away forcibly, without being declared a heretic for doing so. If I had followed the counsels of certain very enlightened men, at the juncture when I was re-establishing religion, I should not have placed myself in a position of dependence upon Rome. Various plans were laid before me. I might have done like the Russians and created a sort of patriarchate, declaring myself head of the Church, or at least its protector, as the King of Prussia is of Protestantism. Thereby everybody would have become Protestant, for they would no longer have gone to confession. Another plan would have been to form a permanent council or committee of bishops to administer the spiritualities. This would have been a Gallican Church; it would not have changed in any way the habits of the people and therefore would have offended the scruples of no decent person, for no one would have known the nature of my relations with Rome.

"I could have carried out what was attempted by Louis XIII and Richelieu, and created a patriarchate.² This might

¹ Pius VII, who had been arrested in Rome, July 6, 1809, had been a prisoner at Savona for three years; he was moved to Fontainebleau in June 1812.

² In the States General of 1614 the Third Estate took the initiative in an article proclaiming the absolute independence of the Crown; the Clergy set this article aside, and Richelieu adopted the role of mediator between the Ultra-

have been done by Louis XIV.¹ I was in a better position than he for liberating France from the annoyance of its subjections to Rome. At bottom, what does it matter to Religion whether purely formal decisions come from Avignon or from Rome, so long as its dogmas and ordinances are observed? Whatever I should have done in those circumstances would have appeared to the most devout Catholic as nothing but a benefit. I always thought that the force of circumstances and the march of ideas would compel Rome to make concessions, but, like all celibates, the priests are egoists. The present is all that matters to them, the future is nothing. Their attitude towards France has resembled that of the men of the Revolution towards the colonies: "Let Rome itself perish rather than one principle be abandoned," and they have imperilled everything. Our priests are exclusive, like our religion. They form an ever-active power.

"What I have not been able to get from this Pope, who is a worthy man, a good pastor, a man without passions, I should never be able to obtain from anyone else. He is most moderate in his counsels. His Cardinals are, however, ultramontanes and spoil everything. It is this foreign spirit, however, this personal interest, which brings everything round to the Popes who are always Italians, and this prevents us from coming to any understanding. Actually the Pope likes me. He knows that I like him and that the changes I desire are all in the future interests of religion, but he is the slave of his conception of duty and he would sooner be martyred than give his consent to an arrangement which would be contrary to the advice of his Apostolic Chamber, which is, for him, as much a matter of obligation as a purely formal affair. The Pope even has a predilection for me, for he knows that it is to me that he owes the re-establishment of religion in France. Like his Cardinals he has been astonished at the montanism of the one and the Gallicanism of the other. "The long pontificate of Urban VIII marked a truce in the relations between the two powers." Gabriel Hanotaux, *Essai sur les libertés de l'Eglise gallicane*, XCIII.

¹ This should read "could not be done"; doubtless a copyist's mistake. Regarding the pretensions of Louis XIV to be spiritual director of the souls in his dominions see *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs de France*, XVII (Rome. II, XX).

THE CONCORDAT

depth of piety that has been found among us, surprised, too, at our good ways of life which are so much better than the ways of Italian bigots. I, too, am attached to the Pope, I have always regretted the necessity of going to extremes with him. He occupies my finest palace; he is served by my household; he can do what he likes, and he knows that I have always wished for him to be treated with all the respect that is his due. There has been a fatality with Rome as with Spain. Things have turned out differently to what I wanted."

The Emperor then added that at the time of the first Concordat¹ it had been easy to give a direction to public opinion, which was quite undecided and in no way clear upon these matters; so he had been able to direct it as he wished, for there was only a sparse clergy in France, insignificant and poor, who would have done anything they had been asked so long as they were given the wherewithal to live. The rising generation, who had no memories of the past, would have followed unopposed in whatever direction the government pointed; the old people, having been for a number of years without any public religion, would have rallied without difficulty to any clergy who would have led them well. Not wishing to make any proselytes, leaving everyone complete liberty of belief, and affording equal protection to all cults, no resistance whatever would have been aroused. The populace, perceiving no change in the administration of the various religious charities, would have dispensed with the utmost ease with papal intervention, and as for the bishops they would have been the less liable to observe certain formal relations with Rome in that it was to their interest to form a Gallican church. It matters little to the nation whether there be a legate of the Holy See resident at Paris, or a sort of patriarch or primate who would issue free of charge dispensations which would otherwise have to be purchased in Rome. Out of respect for the religion of his forefathers, he added, and for questions of conscience in general, he had rejected this project although it had many

¹ July 15, 1801. The Second Concordat, or the Concordat of Fontainebleau, was signed on January 25, 1813. Pius VII retracted his acceptance on March 24.

advocates, even among some of the dignitaries of the Church. One day he would probably be reproached for not having seized this opportunity of freeing France from all the pretensions put forward by the Holy See.

"The present state of affairs," he said, "is a cause of regret to me. The Pope is really two persons in one man, the temporal head of the Church and the Spiritual. It is possible for me to be at war with one and at peace with the other. It does not matter whether the Pope is at Paris, or Avignon, or Rome; the actual site of his residence is immaterial so far as religion or dogma are concerned. The Sacred College may as well be in France as in Italy, it will be as independent in one country as in the other. So far as that goes, I should not even refuse to let the Pope go to Italy if his health should demand his residence in that country. What I want is for him to complete what is now incomplete and to arrange matters so definitely that the clergy, who are always ready to encroach, should no longer find any pretext for making difficulties. As a matter of fact I had not anticipated encountering such a protracted resistance. I am pained by it, for I like and venerate the Pope; but the arrangements planned by Francis I¹ after the Battle of Pavia² and subsequently approved by the States of the Realm as well as by the consensus of opinion at the time,³ can no longer serve as a rule nor impose conditions to which the France of to-day must submit. It has grieved me to find myself obliged to go to extremes with the Pope, whose character I esteem, but reasons of state have forced me to it. I cannot give way. However, I shall do what I can to settle this affair amicably when I reach Paris, though there are points upon which I shall never give way.⁴ Every man must be master in his own house. Religion ought to aid the Government, not to go against it, and cause it embarrassment. It ought to preach

¹ The Concordat of December 19, 1516.

² A mistake. The Battle of Pavia was lost by Francis I on February 24, 1525, nine years after the signing of the Concordat.

³ See Gabriel Hanotaux, *Essai sur les libertés*, LX.

⁴ For the negotiations set on foot by the Emperor on his return, see Count de Mayol de Luppié, *La Captivité de Pie VII*, 643.

THE CONCORDAT

union, order and submission, not foment disorder and rebellion.

"In any case," he went on, "I have not re-established religion in France, with such difficulty and even danger to myself, just to give the Pope the right to meddle in the temporal affairs of my government. By its very nature the clergy is a body of intruders. It ought not to form a people, a section to itself, in the very heart of the nation, a power and an interest bound up in itself in the heart of the State. On the contrary it ought to aid the action of the Government with the utmost zeal, and occupy itself solely in drawing the greatest possible number of the Faithful to the churches, in making them all participate in the consolations that true Religion can offer. Rome," he went on with some warmth, "must march with the spirit of the age unless she wants the age to march on without her. Everything I demand is perfectly reasonable, as much in the interest of the Church as it is in that of the people, and it is wrong to make a political into a religious question. I am as well acquainted with the rights of the Roman Church and its history as the Councillors of the Pope or His Holiness himself can be."

After reverting to the period when he concluded the Concordat, the Emperor talked to me about the Tribunal.¹ He told me that the abuses of the Tribunal having demonstrated to him the inconvenient nature of our political organization, he had sought how they could be remedied. He had striven to calm the most turbulent among the orators by making them realize that a Government that sought to establish itself, and had barely established peaceful relations with the rest of Europe needed to be supported and not attacked. The spirit of hostility that was making itself felt against him crippled his actions abroad as much as it pestered him at home. Obligated to create an entirely new system, completely to reorganize internal affairs, to tend to the wounds inflicted by a protracted revolution, and to calm the passions

¹ The Tribunal composed of a hundred members had been created by the Constitution of Year VIII. Its function was to consider forthcoming legislation, and the Legislative Body had nothing to do but pass or reject these laws without debating them.

it had inflamed, some years of benevolent tolerance were needed, even of indulgence when some error was made, instead of the bitter censure that was levelled against him. It was impossible to restore the finances without imposing some form of order, without eradicating abuses or dismissing certain persons.

"The orators," he went on, "would listen to nothing. They were more occupied with winning popularity than looking after the true interests of the country, and they were invincible. I was convinced of the necessity of making changes; being presented with the simple alternatives of providing for the interests of France or of furthering the pretentious ambitions of a few orators who were mostly destitute of any feeling of patriotism, my decision was speedily taken. I silenced the tribune,¹ acting on the advice of the most liberal-minded men, who desired a workable form of government and realized that it would need to be strong enough to maintain peace at home and abroad. I obtained this result by changing the organization of the Tribune, as it was no longer in harmony with our ideas.²

"This period and the time that followed it was the happiest of my life. I had reconciled France with the Holy See and had concluded a Concordat by which our mutual relations were regulated in what seemed to me a suitable manner. This Concordat," the Emperor said, "had met with much opposition among various statesmen. Certain prominent generals showed themselves even more than opposed. One or two conspiracies were the result, and some of my most faithful and devoted generals of Italy and Egypt were mixed up in them.³ Some made it a pretext for showing their discontent at my not having allowed them to exploit the funds of the State by forming a Pretorian Guard, for whose blind

¹ The admittance of the public to hear debates on legislation was prohibited by a *senatus-consultum* of August 5, 1802.

² The Tribune was reduced to fifty members and then suppressed by the *senatus-consultum* of August 19, 1807, its members being distributed between the Senate, the Legislative Body and the prefectural or judiciary administration.

³ Augereau was entrusted by his comrades with the task of expressing to the First Consul their desire not to appear at the ceremony of re-establishing Religion that was to take place at Notre-Dame.

devotion I should have to pay by pouring out my gold. Some I removed from their commands, others I dismissed. For some time I even refused to see those implicated, but eventually I pardoned them, just as though they had not abused my confidence and had been guilty of nothing more heinous than misplaced zeal. They thought they had been merely indiscreet: as I am incapable of bearing rancour all was forgotten."

The Emperor reverted to his differences with Rome, and the project many people had entertained at the time of the Concordat for withdrawing France from her spiritual dependence upon the Holy See. The interruption of relations that followed upon the Revolution had established the fact that the Faithful wanted priests to say Mass and administer Extreme Unction. "But it mattered little," said the Emperor, "whether those priests were instituted by the Vatican or by a committee of bishops. All that was needed was to regularize the existing state of things, and satisfy the religious requirements of the community. In such an organization the bishops would have found an independence and a power that would have been entirely to their liking. The hope of attaining to the highest place in this Council or Committee of the Gallican Church would have flattered their ambition and at the same time have furnished the Government with guarantees of Anti-ultramontane principles. I have been carried away by the prejudices of my childhood, or rather, seduced by the hope that the Concordat would achieve the pacification of the West and knit together all men of understanding. I thought that the clergy, whom I had re-established at the peril of my life, would be devoted to me: I imagined that the Roman Court, enlightened as to its true interests in the eighteenth century, would second my endeavours. But I have been mistaken. The clearly recognized interests, the ideas and the habits of the times, all ought to have guaranteed for me the agreement and backing of the Church. I discussed the matter with Rome, with priests as with other men. I thought that their interests would outweigh their prejudices, and my mistake has cost me dear. Time and reflexion triumph over much opposition, they bring back the most recalcitrant of men: but

nothing has an effect on a clergy who are foreign to the country. At Rome little attention is paid to the interests of France. The clergy is Roman, for its head resides in Rome; it is a nation to itself in the midst of other nations. So far as priests are concerned, their fatherland is Rome, thus it is that we can never be in agreement. Common sense means nothing to the clergy; they seek their own interests before all else. Opposition becomes a dogma; resistance to authority carries with it the palm of immortality, and all the more so when it demands a courage that entails no danger. These good gentlemen have a relish for this new and comfortable form of martyrdom which would bring more honour to them were I stupid enough to torment them. But I leave them to their zeal. I have been mistaken. Excellent priests told me so at the time; the establishment of a Gallican Church would have been far preferable. I should have attained the same end. Everyone would have been at peace, even contented, with the exception of those devout souls whose resistance I have never overcome. I have created this embarrassing situation for myself by paying attention to people whom I have brought back just to annoy me. These Romans must not meddle with our affairs; foreigners have no place in them. A man's house is his castle. One of these days I shall finish off the whole matter by talking privately to the Pope; he is a good priest and a venerable Christian who desires nothing but what is good."

I represented to the Emperor that to me it seemed difficult to settle all these differences amicably, seeing what discrepancies there were between our actual demands and the previous arrangements, not to mention the loss, so far as the Pope himself was concerned, of his Estates.¹ This loss put a different aspect on his relations with the whole of Christendom and deprived him of the independence required by his pontificate in matters temporal as well as spiritual. I advanced the matter of his health, the differences of climate, and finally the question of that self-respect which animates

¹ The States of the Church had been invaded in April 1808 and their annexation to France was decreed on May 17, 1809.

all men, more especially those of sovereign estate, and pre-eminently one the nature of whose sovereignty bears a sacred character in the eyes of Christendom.

The Emperor listened to what I said with the utmost benevolence, convinced as he was, in some respects, with the justness of my remarks.

"It was the constant Italian intrigues," he said, "that forced me to take the Pope away from Rome."

Even since his removal it had been impossible to bring the Italian Cardinals to reason. If the Pope were to go back everything would be overturned and an intolerable state of affairs would ensue. Never had Italy been so tranquil as since the Pope's departure. Every intrigue, English and otherwise, had miscarried, and this happy result was due, in spite of the absence of any military forces, to the decision that he, the Emperor, had made. As Bishop of Paris, the Pope would not be unhappy as he had been when Bishop of Rome. He would be very comfortably established in the archbishop's palace which had already been refitted and could be made into a splendid residence.¹ If the climate did not agree with him perhaps Avignon would suit him better. Having made the mistake of allowing the Roman Court to meddle in imperial affairs, and that Court having made the mistake of refusing his reasonable demands and taken umbrage at them, things being what they were the Emperor could not, he said, give way.

"Now," His Majesty went on, "it is indispensable to keep the Pope in France and to bring the Cardinals to him, so that he shall have the Sacred College under his influence. The decision as to this rests with France, since her Catholic population represents the majority of the Pope's adherents. This being the case he would find himself in the very midst of his flock. Where should I be if the Pope were to die, and this wise man who among all the successors of the Prince of the Apostles has shown himself so moderate, were to be replaced by an Austrian or an Italian, fiercely antagonistic—ultramontane as would certainly be the case? The role of prisoner

¹ This refers to the old archbishop's palace adjacent to Notre-Dame.

and petty martyr that the Pope now plays, or is made to play by his counsellors, is already the cause of enough embarrassment, I have no desire to add to it. The interest that naturally attaches to everyone who is deemed to be persecuted is in this case augmented by the veneration in which the Pope's character is justly held—a veneration that is strengthened by the idea of his spiritual and temporal sovereignty. No one thought about the Pope when he was in Rome. No one cared about him or what he did. My coronation and his appearance in Paris gave him an importance that his subsequent misfortunes have only served to increase. At Fontainebleau he is a free man: but he is called a prisoner. He has a fine residence; they say he lacks for everything. He can go where he likes, except to Italy; he is said to be in fetters. He has my carriages, my stables are at his disposal; but just because he has not chosen to leave his room he is said to be in the clutches of a gaoler. A few devotees and intriguing priests proclaim him a martyr, to excite sympathy and inaugurate a Little Church.¹ They thought to make me tremble with an excommunication. Charles V laughed at such a thing and I shall pay no more attention to it than he did. These Roman thunderbolts are nothing. This excommunication has damaged the Pope rather than me in public opinion.² The sympathy that is aroused by one who is in no position to defend himself is what touches and moves the heart of Frenchmen.

“We shall get to the truth in the end; eventually it will be generally known that it is the Pope's counsellors who force him into difficult situations. When that is realized he will be the object of no more sympathy. In short, this business of the Pope is embarrassing in the present state of affairs and it is an

¹ The name Little Church was applied to that group of ecclesiastics and laity who refused to recognize the Concordat of 1801. The majority of its adherents were to be found in Touraine and the west of France, where the clergy, for the greater part old *émigrés*, raised altar against altar. At its head were the archbishops and bishops of the old regime who had not wished to resign their offices into the hands of the Pope.

² Although not specified by name, and therefore excluded from the effects of the excommunication, it was really against Napoleon that the bull *Quam memoranda* was launched, June 10, 1809.

embarrassment that I mean to put an end to. I could settle more by talking to the Pope for just one hour than could be arranged in a whole year of diplomatic conversations through any bishops I might send him. He knows that I revere him and that I have done more than anyone else for religion, and this gives me an immense advantage in his eyes. He realizes that in my position I cannot yield upon certain points that inevitably concern the peace and well-being of the State. I shall endeavour to finish things off. However, I cannot let slip this opportunity of delimiting once and for all the rights of the Gallican Church and its spiritual sovereign—for I know of only one temporal sovereign in France; myself. Religion will lose nothing by what I propose, nor will the Pope, for I will make him richer than he has ever been. His influence will be augmented by all the influence that is mine. By living in Paris, which is more suitable than Rome, he will not be any the less head of the Catholic Church. Everyone will gain by it. The Church will have nothing to do but minister to the Faithful. The arms of Heaven will no longer be invoked to cause trouble on Earth. Religion will come to the aid of government instead of being opposed to it; it will defend thrones rather than attack them. What does it matter to the cause of Religion whether the successor of St. Peter be Bishop of Paris or Bishop of Rome?"

The Emperor went on to reflect that it was impossible to gain any idea of the influence the clergy were constantly trying to exercise, that the hand of the Jesuits was to be found everywhere, that the desire of making conversions was as powerful as it had been thirty years ago.

"The clergy," he said, "constitute a power that is never quiescent. Enemies if they are not friends, their services are never to be had for nothing. Unless one is to be under an obligation to them it is imperative to be their master. In self-defence they must be curbed, otherwise a troublesome state of hostility will be engendered which would be inconvenient in that it would necessitate punishment. For the clergy to be kept as an aid to government they must remain on a friendly footing; and for that it is essential that their

rights should be clearly defined. In my time their pretensions would never amount to anything of consequence, but when I am gone they would increase. God has given me the strength and the zest to undertake great things. I must not leave them imperfectly accomplished. The clergy must occupy themselves with reconciling us to Heaven, giving our womenfolk religious consolation, and extending the same to us when we get old; and they must abandon the power of this world. King in his own temple, the priest must become a subject when he crosses the threshold."

The Emperor returned to the question of conversion and proselytizing, recounting to me what he had discovered a few years before.

"The Jesuits," he said, "were recruited from the lycées and even from the *École Polytechnique*, in the heart of the eager and enthusiastic youth which still passed as Republican beneath the very shadow of the Imperial Eagles. When I was first informed of their successful propaganda in the lycées, far from opposing it I was well satisfied that young men should be recruited for the seminaries. But when I observed how things were tending, becoming anxious that the best endeavours should not go astray, I caused an exact account to be rendered to me of what numbers the schools were supplying to the clergy. Surprised to find that the Jesuits had taken pupils from the *École Polytechnique*, and annoyed that they should have had this success at the cost of the secular clergy, I sent for Monge, founder of the *École Polytechnique* and still the father and the counsellor of all its ardent youths.¹ 'These are fine things I hear about your school,' I said. 'Are your young people getting their heads turned?' Without listening to what I was going to say, Monge imagined that his young men, full of ideas and memories of Rome and Greece, had displeased me by some

¹ After leaving the Ministry of Marine, April 15, 1793, Gaspard Monge rented a house in which he established a school for young men destined for the army or the navy. This was the origin of the Central School of Public Works, which later became the *École Polytechnique*. On his return from Egypt (October 9, 1799), Monge was nominated Senator (3 Nivose, Year VIII), and Director of the *École Polytechnique* in 1802, which position he retained until the Second Restoration.

discussion or proposition, and he immediately began to assure me that it required a little time to make young heads submit to other influence, or to change youthful opinions. 'The Empire,' he told me, 'was something quite unexpected until a few years ago. These young men will become monarchic with time, and after their first campaign.' 'Monarchic, indeed——' I began, but without letting me finish my sentence Monge interrupted in his wheedling voice (and the Emperor laughed heartily as he said this), 'Your Majesty has turned so sharply that many people have been unable to keep pace with you!'"

The Emperor told me that he had not been able to help laughing even more heartily at this naive reply. By this time, amazed at his own audacity, Monge was yet more astounded at the Emperor's reply, when he cried, "Your young men have turned even more sharply than I have, for they are becoming Jesuits." Monge was stupefied. "Jesuits?" he exclaimed, like a man who could not believe his ears. The Emperor gave him the names of the neophytes and told him to make inquiries as to the tendency of this religious fervour and if any other pupils had been won over. He was assured that the movement was confined to two elect souls; one of them a distinguished young man whose imagination was so vivid that he should have been under observation to see that it led him in a right direction.¹

¹ This is how François Arago, in his *Histoire de ma jeunesse*, I, 96, records these facts: "There was at that time in the Bois de Boulogne a dwelling called The Grey House where M. Coessin, high priest of a new religion, gathered round him a certain number of adepts, such as Lesueur, the musician; Collin, tutor of chemistry at the École, Binet, etc. A police report had been handed to the Emperor, to the effect that the frequenters of The Grey House were affiliated to the Society of Jesus. The Emperor was disturbed and irritated at the news. 'Well,' said he to M. Monge, 'so your beloved pupils are turning into followers of Loyola, eh?' Monge began to deny it. 'You deny it, do you?' retorted the Emperor; 'well, it may interest you to know that one of your tutors is in this clique.' Everyone will understand that after such an observation it was impossible for M. Monge to suggest M. Binet as his successor." It was for this reason that in 1809 Arago was chosen by Monge to succeed him.

Jacques Philippe Marie Binet, born at Rennes, February 2, 1786, died at Paris, May 12, 1856, was an old pupil of the Polytechnique, where he graduated in 1804. Shortly after leaving the school he became tutor in geometry under the professorship of Monge, was Director of Studies throughout the Restoration, became professor at the College of France, and was elected Member of the Academy of Sciences, July 10, 1843. Colin, or rather Collin, who had graduated in 1799, had a more obscure career.

"This discovery," the Emperor pursued, "opened my eyes as to the underhand method of the Society of Jesus, and I had them watched. If I had found more vocations for the sacerdotal state in France I should have paid no attention to the Jesuits, but, far from that being the case, whatever inducements I held out, even to the exemption from conscription, they were never able to ordain more than three thousand secular priests a year, while seven thousand died. Some Departments furnished no more than twenty candidates for the priesthood. The mountainous districts sent the greatest number of lads to the seminaries. I am in hopes that a state of peace will increase the number."

Before concluding my narrative concerning the Emperor's campaign and journey I must return to the antechamber. The Bulletin had caused such a painful sensation that, as I have already observed, no one dared question me. The only servant [Roustam] who had accompanied us was asleep, and in any case had been forbidden to say anything. The Emperor expressed himself as freely about our reverses as the Bulletin did, but it had been impossible to get news yet of the arrival of the army at Wilna and consequently, like everyone else, he was unaware of the overwhelming disasters that had befallen it. His legs were slightly swollen, his eyes puffy, his complexion that of one whose skin has been affected by the snow, but otherwise he appeared in perfect health. He was so delighted to be once again in Paris that he had no need to compose his features into an appearance of satisfaction; there was no look of a defeated man about him. He worked all that day and even part of the night,¹ sending out orders and imparting to every section of the Administration the energy he desired them to exhibit. It seemed to me that he was quite satisfied with public opinion and the courage it had exhibited on the publication of the Bulletin. His arrival had allayed many fears and diminished the gravest uncertainty;

¹ December 19. The Emperor worked all that day with Cambacérès, Savary, Decrès and Clarke and did not retire to his own apartments until one o'clock in the morning. (Schuermans, *Itinéraire*, 315.)

THE MISTAKE OF MOSCOW

but alas, it could not wipe away the tears of families who had their losses to deplore!

The Emperor talked of his disasters and of the mistake he had made in remaining at Moscow in the same tone as a stranger might have employed.

"The enterprise was successful for eight days," he said. "It is the same with everything in this world; it all depends on the right moment, the right circumstances."

When receiving Decrès and de Cessac, his first words were:

"Well, gentlemen, fortune has dazzled me. I have let it lead me astray instead of following the plan I had in mind, of which I had already spoken to you, Monsieur de Cessac.¹ I went to Moscow. I thought to sign peace there. I stayed there too long. I thought to obtain in one year what could only be gained by two campaigns. I made a grave mistake, but I shall have the means to repair it."

From the very first the outward appearance of Paris afforded him consolation. The effect produced by his return was prodigious. The Emperor perceived this, and after the second day was reassured as to the consequences that his losses might entail. The disaster of Wilna did not cause him to alter his opinion.

"The dreadful Bulletin has done its work," he said to me; "but I observe that my presence affords more satisfaction here than our disaster caused dismay. People are more afflicted than discouraged. Vienna will get to know of this and in three months all will be repaired once more."

If I have omitted many particulars in my relation of conversations with the Emperor during the long time we were alone together, I can at least guarantee the exactness of what I have narrated, frequently, indeed, even to the actual words used. My conscience has not deceived me any more than has my memory. I had long been accustomed to speaking my thoughts freely to the Emperor, without fear of shocking

¹ The plan was to take up position at Witepsk, organize the Polish provinces and overwhelm Russia by a deployment of immense forces if these tactics did not lead to peace during the winter. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

him, and it is only doing him justice to say that during our journey he invited me rather to abandon all restraint than to choose my words. In this he encouraged me by his own freedom in discussion and the confidences he imparted to me. He afforded me proof of what I already had thought, namely, that though he did not always relish the entire truth, he nevertheless esteemed those who spoke it from conscientious motives.

In other circumstances, whenever the conversation touched on some subject he wished to avoid, he would break it off in some way or another; by going away or dismissing me, if it happened to be in his own apartments, or by interruption with instructions about some totally different matter; or sometimes merely remarking: "You don't know anything about it." In the sledge, on the contrary, he was in a constant state of excitement. Was it that his spirit was hurt? He joked and, above all, showed that he needed to open his heart. If some stray remarks proved too unpleasant, he would change the subject for a moment, but would return to it later that day or on the morrow. Throughout this journey the Emperor had the goodness, as I can affirm confidently, to listen to all I had to say with scarcely a feeling of annoyance, and I was able to convince myself from the nature and freedom of his conversation that one could enjoy many rights to his confidence without having any rights to his favour.

The Emperor slept in the sledge as in his bed for several hours at a time. Altogether, his physical organization in no way yielded to his moral. He had all the strength, all the health he needed. It might be said that he could sleep at will.¹ The discomforts of travelling in a sledge, in which he could not lie down and was barely able to stretch his legs, the fatigue of such a long and difficult journey in such a rigorous season, all this had no other effect on him than a slight swelling of the legs that lasted a few days, rather puffy eyes and a complexion slightly tinged by exposure to the cold.

If I may be permitted to say a word as to what I suffered myself in consequence of this journey, I must say that save

¹ "He slept when he wished and how he wished. However much he was in need of sleep, three or four hours sufficed him." (Baron Fain, *Mémoires*, 289.)

for increased thinness I felt no greater inconvenience than the Emperor, although I had not shut my eyes once during those fourteen days and nights; moreover, to my bodily weariness was added the strain that any man of spirit must feel at having his honour charged with such a duty, entailing the exercise of all his care and foresight. After we reached Paris it was at least a week before I could get any sleep, so worked-up was I.

This narrative having necessitated the mention of some painful—perhaps vexatious—incidents in the life of a great man, it is my duty as a faithful observer who has hidden none of his subject's faults to draw attention in like manner to his qualities; for, as Kléber said to Bonaparte on his return to Cairo after the repulse at Acre: "Do not trouble about that; it is merely a speck of dust on a fine coat." It is my intention, therefore, to enter into details as to the character and habits of the Emperor.

The Emperor was not by nature violent; when he liked, no one could be more completely master of himself.¹ Proof of this can be seen in the fact that, with scarcely any exceptions, and in circumstances calculated to make any man lose his self-control, His Majesty maintained his habitual calm and serious manner, even when he had every cause for complaint. His manner on such occasions was, it is true, very sharp, but it was not disconcerting nor humiliating.

If I sometimes heard him make use of what may be called coarse expressions, it was at the most on five or six occasions, and then only with people whose conduct was such that they had forfeited any claim on his self-control. As to the nature of those expressions, he did not attach to the words he used the importance and subtle significance that other persons might have done. Perhaps he was lacking in that urbanity, that delicacy of refinement, above all that attitude of tolerance in regard to the small things of life, that in great souls goes by the name of politeness. Customs and tradition demanded

¹ "Hot Corsican blood circulated in his veins; but the self-control habitual to one in command had early accustomed him to check his first impulse." (Fain, *Mémoires*, 292.)

that in his own interests our sovereign should exhibit this suavity of manner, but what the Emperor may have lacked in this respect through the circumstance of early education and the habits of childhood was amply compensated by the ability, carried to the highest degree, to act with graciousness where matters of any importance were at stake. Certain verbal expressions that offend our ears did not possess, for the Emperor, the same meaning as we attach to them. He even assumed all the airs of a well-bred man, and was more than ordinarily observant to profit by the manners of those with whom he came in contact. He frequently mentioned with a sort of affectation certain prominent circles that he had frequented in his younger days. He loved to talk of his success with women. If there was a weak side to the magnificent and marvellous character that constituted the Emperor Napoleon it was a certain vanity about the past, as though such a wealth of glory and genius had need of producing its antecedents!

One or two of the somewhat obscene expressions he sometimes permitted himself to use originated, I fancy, in camp during the early years of the Revolution. But no such word escaped him inadvertently and he only spoke thus when he was bantering; he rarely spoke coarsely when he was angry.

Everybody in the Emperor's *entourage* complained of his usage, of his bearing towards them, of his manner of speaking in their daily communication. By nature or by calculation it was rarely that he exhibited the least appearance of kindness, and when he showed that he was pleased, one might almost say it was in spite of himself.

"The French," he used to say, "are superficial, familiar, and ready to eat out of one's hand. If one wants to avoid the necessity of putting them in their place one must be serious with them and keep one's own place. Royalty is a part to be played; a sovereign should be always playing it."

He was, therefore, invariably grave and serious, even when he wanted to assume an attitude of benevolence and, as he used to say, lay himself out to cajole people.

LIFE AND HABITS OF THE EMPEROR

If the Emperor had occasion to indicate his displeasure it was most frequently through the medium of a third person. If the individual concerned was a man of some prominence and the occasion sufficiently grave for him personally to show his displeasure, he only did so partially; the brunt of his resentment would fall on some innocent third party, for he liked to give vent to his anger. He was careful with those he talked to, for, as he frankly explained, he never wanted to find himself in the position of not being able to make use of people, or to let anyone ever imagine the door to be finally closed upon him. He used to say that the Government ought to make a principle of never turning anyone away, but, on the contrary, of attracting those who held themselves aloof. He told me of marshals, generals, and other very prominent men whom he had thought loyal and counted among his truest friends, who had conspired against him during the Consulate, especially at the time of the Concordat; and he had simply punished them by banishing them from Court for a few months. Acting on this principle, he had very rarely to make an example. It was always, he said, in spite of his inclinations and only when he was forced to do so in the interests of the public that he resorted to even such mild measures, while even then he avoided all recourse to legal convictions.

"It was with profound regret that I adopted a rigorous attitude with General de Marescot," he told me; "but his position as a high official of the Empire, his rank, his ability, increased his crime a hundredfold. Reasons of state forced me to act as I did; I would have pardoned a man less prominent in the public eye."

As for General Dupont, he could not employ harsh enough terms to express his feelings. His chief grievance against him was that article in the capitulation which, he said, saved the baggage wagons and as a consequence the general's private fortune,¹ but at the same time permitted the dishonouring of

¹ Article 11 of the Capitulation of July 21, 1808: "General officers of less rank one carriage and one baggage wagon, officers of less rank one carriage, that shall not be subject to any examination."

the army by authorizing powers of search in the private soldiers' haversacks for proofs of the pillage that was known to be taking place.¹ He could not remain cool when speaking of this. Convinced as he was that a Council of War would condemn the General, in memory of his gallantry at Ulm,² the Emperor had refrained from doing more than institute a private inquiry. On the very eve of undertaking a great war with Russia and having his army corps separated by great distances, he had been obliged to rake up this affair which he had thought finished, in order to establish strict laws to regulate the behaviour of those who might be tempted like the general, to pass beneath the Caudine fork.³ It was at this period, and for the same reason, that instructions were issued regarding the defence of fortresses and the responsibilities of commanding officers.⁴

The Emperor showed favour to neither officer nor private; nevertheless he was no stickler for discipline and shut his eyes to irregularities. He did not like to be so much as told of any infringement of rules so long as they did not go beyond excesses in eating or drinking. He was ready to grant that his system of warfare could not admit of severe discipline, as

¹ Article 15 of the above Capitulation: "On several occasions, and notably at the assault of Cordova, a number of soldiers in defiance of their generals' orders and their officers' attempts to restrain them, indulged in such excesses as are only to be expected when towns offer resistance up to the very moment of being entered; generals and officers will therefore take such measures as are necessary to discover the whereabouts of such church plate as has been taken, and to restore it if it can be laid hands on."

² Dupont had given brilliant proof of his ability to manœuvre at the Battles of Haslach, in October 1805.

³ A court of inquiry appointed by the Emperor in September 1808, considered that the generals inculpated ought to appear before a special commission. Generals Dupont and Vedel, arrested when they landed in France, were confined in the Abbaye and then set at liberty. But in February 1812, Dupont was arrested again and summoned before an extraordinary council presided over by Cambacérès, with Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely acting as his advocate. On March 1 the Council cashiered the vanquished warrior of Baylen, and Napoleon had him imprisoned in the fort of Joux, and in May 1815 placed under surveillance at Dreux. It was there that the provisional government sent for him, in April 1814, to make him Commissioner of War.

⁴ "Imperial decree determining the cases when generals and military commandants may capitulate, and the manner of judging and punishing those who capitulate in circumstances where no capitulation is permissible. At the Palace of Saint-Cloud, May 1, 1812."

the troops were forced to subsist without any proper rationing. But if he winked at irregularities committed by the troops in times of plenty, he was severe when the same things occurred in the days of want. He permitted no complaints and often cited the example of the Roman legions. In the Eylau campaign those mighty examples of valour and endurance served as texts for all his conversations throughout the winter. He tried to prove that it was possible to do without anything. He sought to model us on the example of the heroes, to excite us by those noble memories and famous examples. The French will fight well without being worked up by excitement; they know how to suffer privation and discomfort, even how to die of hunger, so long as glory marches by the side of danger; but when the guns cease to thunder, and they are fighting a rear-guard action, in full retreat, their courage goes to their legs and from heroes they turn into ordinary men.

The Emperor condemned more than anyone else the crimes of the Revolution and even the Revolution itself. On this account he felt a certain aversion towards those men of the old Court who had taken part in it. He often spoke of them to me with unfeigned disgust. The organization of the peerage and that great endowment in expiation of the crimes of the Revolution that took its form in the magnificent structure of the Madeleine, which was destined as a temple of glory, were two ideas that he placed in the forefront and that occupied much of his thought. He planned the erection of a monument to Louis XVI and his Queen, as well as others to commemorate the many victims who had perished in those dreadful times.

The Emperor never pardoned men who used their official position as a means of making money, of squeezing the districts under their administration or, what was worse, of trading on their posts to gain credit. He spoke with contempt of Marshal Brune,¹ and never mentioned M. de

¹ Brune, Marshal of the Empire, May 19, 1804, had been placed in command of the Hanseatic towns by a decree of December 15, 1806, and relieved of his duties in September 1807, on the official pretext that he had omitted the Emperor's name in a convention signed with Sweden. Napoleon left him without employment until the Hundred Days.

Bourrienne¹ without calling him "that rascal." Nor were they the only ones to whom he applied such terms.

The Emperor Napoleon was what in the days of the Revolution would have been called an "aristocrat." His own observations would lead one to imagine that he was of this turn of mind even before his accession to power, although he had not always based his conduct upon it. No royalist in the Court at Hartwell² could have spoken of the Bourbons, of the Revolution and its woes, with deeper feeling or more sincere regret; but such remarks were invariably coupled with the reflexions of a statesman and a firm resolve to make the utmost of all the Revolution had produced that was great and useful.

"It was," said he, "an era that gave new life to France when she had been stricken prostrate by a succession of favourites, of kings' mistresses and all the abuses that followed in their train. To end all that it was necessary to pool all opinion and to make use of men the most violently opposed to one another. The most conclusive proof of success is when the government feels itself strong; it is then that it imparts impulse instead of receiving it."

As a general rule he held men in but little estimation. He rarely had a word of praise, even for those who had done the most, except at the actual moment of their prowess or unless he wanted them to strive still further. On the other hand, doubtless in some spirit of justice, he was equally sparing with his blame and scarcely ever uttered a word of censure, unless for a very grave fault. No doubt the thought that they might do better later on was in some degree the reason for this apparent indulgence; for although he seldom showed himself rigorous he did not forget. If for some serious reason he removed a man from his post, it was only for a time.

¹ Louis Antoine Fauvalet de Charbonnières de Bourrienne, born at Sens, July 9, 1769, had been for a long time Secretary to the First Consul, who had been obliged to send him away on account of his plundering propensities. Cf. *Mémoires de la Reine Hortense*, I, 105.

² Hartwell House, in Buckinghamshire, 58 miles north-west of London, where the Count of Provence took up his residence in 1811.

THE EMPEROR'S ATTITUDE TO HIS MINISTERS

"A sovereign," he said, "ought never to deprive men of all hope of pardon."

His sensibilities were wounded by any offence against refinement, any unhandsome behaviour or lack of respect, although his own early upbringing was in no way remarkable in this regard, while the constant necessity of playing a diplomatic part precluded him from exhibiting those qualities that he demanded from others. In his private conversation he continually complained of people, particularly of those about him, even of the Prince of Neuchâtel and of Duroc, of his ministers and the heads of public services, just as though he were badly served. I was often able to judge from the manner in which the Emperor spoke to me of others how he spoke of me to them. But it would be ungrateful of me to forget that in my absence he often praised the service of which I had the direction. He really adopted this attitude for the double purpose of stimulating zeal in his servants and of inducing them to criticize each other. He liked to set the various heads of administration in opposition to one another, and would not have minded in the least had they all been at loggerheads. I often noticed that he did his utmost to make Duroc and me jealous of one another—even mutual enemies.¹

His low opinion of men in general rarely made the Emperor demand of them greater abilities or virtues than they actually possessed. He never forgot, but on the other hand he never bore rancour. No one suffered from his personal dislike. His interests, his policy were ever paramount. It may be said that he had no marked likes or dislikes where minor matters were concerned, and everything goes to show that this spirit of indulgence or indifference arose out of the poor opinion he had of men in general. If motives of policy often made him show his clemency, his personal feelings also tended in the same direction, and they carried more weight than he would have cared to avow. Another and very cogent cause for his clemency was the belief that all men act as circumstances impel them.

¹ Duroc being Lord High Steward and Caulaincourt being Master of the Horse, their respective functions brought them into continual contact.

There can be few people about whom the Emperor has not spoken to me at one time or another, from the Empress herself down to the most insignificant individuals; so I frequently had occasion to observe that nothing escaped him. He viewed men's private lives as unsympathetically as he did their public actions. He saw everything in the light of self-interest. Always consciously playing the part of Emperor, he imagined everyone else to be acting an equally studied part towards himself. His first impression was always that of distrust and this inspired his instinctive attitude. This lasted but for a moment, but the fact remained that his first thoughts were at least harsh if not actually offensive. Always suspicious that your views or any proposition you put forward had some personal or hidden end, whether you were friend or enemy he viewed you with the same suspicion. I have so often experienced this that I can speak with full authority. The Emperor thought and said on all occasions that ambition and self-interest are the motives of every action. Rarely would he admit that anyone had done well solely from a sense of honour or delicacy; yet he noticed people who appeared to be actuated by those sentiments, or guided by a perception of duty. He made a silent note of it but never gave any outward indication. Often has he given me cause to wonder whether sovereigns realize that they, too, have neighbours to whom they owe a duty.

The chivalry and courtesy so characteristic of the French temperament, the affable and benevolent tone adopted by men of princely position in conversation with their subjects even when they are signing a minister's letter of dismissal, all these graces were wholly lacking in the Emperor. He only dissimulated when very important matters were at stake; conscious, no doubt, of his own superiority in strength and character he took no trouble to hide his feelings in the ordinary affairs of life, nor sometimes even in more weighty affairs. He was often indiscreet. He generally said more than he meant to say or ought to have said when anything was under discussion. Had he but exhibited even a shade of that particular courtesy with which French life is tinted, he would

have been adored, he would have turned all heads. Yet he possessed one great and rare quality: he disliked changes. He kept to the men he employed and preferred using a bad instrument to changing it for a new one. You may not have been made much of in the Emperor's service, but at least you were sure that no intrigue or plot behind your back would poison his mind against you. As the Government had but one impulse and fixed maxims upon which to work, and as the Emperor governed entirely by himself, the terms of office enjoyed by the ministers were dependent on no change in the system. The more you were maligned to the Emperor the more persistent he was in probing the truth as to the faults alleged against you, and the more obstinate he showed himself in retaining you near him.

"I am my own minister," he often used to say. "It is I who conduct affairs. I am powerful enough to get the very best out of mediocre men. Probity, discretion and activity are all that I demand of a man."

In himself the Emperor was exceedingly good-natured. His attitude to the Empress was tender and affectionate. Long before his marriage he had been passionately in love with the Empress Josephine and to the end he retained a deep attachment to her. He liked to talk in praise of her charms and goodness long after he had ceased to see her. No woman ever made such an impression on him; according to the Emperor, she was all the Graces personified.

It is a mistake to think he had many mistresses. He lost his head sometimes, it is true, but it was rarely that he felt any need of love or, indeed, any pleasure in it. He lived too much in the public eye to indulge, even secretly, in a distraction which actually afforded him but little amusement and lasted but for a moment. For some days, however, he really was in love with Madam D.¹ Partly as a pastime and partly

¹ This initial stands for Madame Duchatel (Marie Antoinette Adele Papin), born at Aire (Landes), July 4, 1782, died at Paris, May 20, 1860, married in 1802 to Charles Jacques Nicholas Duchatel, thirty years older than herself. From 1801 to 1815 he was Director-General of Registrations and Customs. Cf. *Mémoires de la Reine Hortense*, I, 202; *Mémoires de Mme. de Rémusat*, II, 87; and Frédéric Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes*, XI, 137.

as a pretext for breaking with the Empress Josephine, he had an affair with Madame Gaz.¹ and with Madame Mat.² during the time that elapsed between the divorce and his marriage to the Arch-Duchess. During the last years of the Empress Josephine he had Mademoiselle George³ and a few other women, as much from curiosity as from a wish to revenge himself for the scenes of jealousy these infidelities caused. Mademoiselle W. found favour in his eyes at Warsaw;⁴ he had a son by her and remembered her with greater attachment than any other of his mistresses. But none of these passing fancies distracted him for one brief moment from affairs of State.

The Emperor was so eager to recount his amorous successes that one might almost have imagined he only engaged in them for the sake of talking about them. The Empress was his chief confidante. Woe to the complaisant beauty if she was not as shapely as the Venus de Medicis, for no detail escaped his critical eye or was spared in the minutely circumstantial narrative he loved to make to certain persons to whom he liked to vaunt his success. The Empress Josephine received that very same evening a full account of the conquest of Madame D. On the morning after the first rendezvous the Empress told me all about it, without omitting one single circumstance that might either flatter or shock the fair lady. That grenadier in the camp at Boulogne was not far wrong when he answered one of his comrades who had asked whether

¹ Caulaincourt is referring to Carlotta Gazzani, *née* Bartoni, called also Baroness Brentano, who was appointed reader to the Empress Josephine after the coronation in Milan. From 1805 to 1808 she was Napoleon's mistress at very irregular intervals. Cf. F. Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes*, 115.

² Caulaincourt is alluding to Madame Mathis, for whom the Emperor had a passing fancy at the time the Court was beginning to talk about the divorce. She was one of Princess Pauline's ladies.—Christine Ghilini, died December 10, 1841, married François Hilaire Scipion Marie Mathis, Count de Cacciorna, born at Bra (Piedmont), March 26, 1784. She was Napoleon's mistress from August to October 1807.

³ The reference is to the famous member of the Comédie Française, Marguerite Josephine Weimer, known as Mademoiselle George. The tragedienne's relations with Napoleon went back further than Caulaincourt suspected, as they commenced in Nivose, Year X, and ceased when Mlle. George fled to Russia, May 11, 1808. Cf. Frédéric Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes*, 102.

⁴ Madame Walewska. Napoleon saw Madame Walewska for the first time at Bronie, January 1, 1807.

le Petit Caporal had any children: "You fool, don't you know that he keeps his private parts in his head?"

The Emperor needed much sleep, but he could sleep when he wanted to, by day as well as at night.¹ The eve of a battle never disturbed his rest, and even in the heat of the action, if he came to the conclusion that no decisive move could be made for an hour or so, he would stretch himself out on the ground on his bearskin and fall into a profound slumber until he was called. I myself witnessed such an occasion at the Battle of Bautzen. It was between half-past eleven and one o'clock,² and the Emperor had inspected the whole position.

"Things must be allowed to take their course," he said. "It will be a couple of hours before I can strike a hard blow."

He slept for more than an hour.

On a campaign he was awakened for everything. Even the Prince of Neuchâtel, who received all despatches and knew His Majesty's plans, decided nothing. The Emperor always arose at eleven o'clock at night, or at the latest, midnight, when the first despatches from the army corps came to hand. He worked for two or three hours, often even longer, comparing the despatches, tracing out on the map the various movements of troops and issuing his orders. He dictated everything to the Major-General, or to a secretary, and the orders were transmitted by the Prince of Neuchâtel. Sometimes he wrote personally to the army corps commanders in order to compel their attention when something of great importance was contemplated, but this did not prevent the formal orders passing through the routine of the General Staff.

The Emperor occupied himself with the most minute details. He wanted everything to bear the imprint of his genius. He would send for me to receive his orders for headquarters, for the orderly officers, for his staff officers, for the

¹ "It was his habit to sleep about seven hours out of the twenty-four; but it was always in several naps, broken when he desired, night as well as day." (Fain, *Mémoires*, 290.)

² "The Emperor, who had passed the night giving orders, yielded to his need for sleep on the slope of a ravine, in the midst of the Duke of Ragusa's batteries; he is awakened, draws out his watch, and directing the fire, proclaims a victory." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 409.)

letters, for the couriers, postal service, etc. The commanding officer of the Guard; the controller of the army commissariat; Larrey, the excellent surgeon-general, all were summoned at least once a day. Nothing escaped his solicitude. Indeed, his foresight might well be called by the name of solicitude, for no detail seemed too humble to receive his attention. Whatever might contribute to the success or well-being of his soldiers appeared to him worthy of daily care. Never can it be said of the Emperor that he was lulled into slumber by prosperity, for however great a victory he may have won, at the very moment that success was assured he occupied himself with as many precautions as he would have taken had it been a defeat.

Even when chasing the enemy helter-skelter before him, or in the heat of one of his greatest victories, no matter how weary the Emperor was he always had an eye for ground that could be held in the event of a reverse. In this respect he had an astonishing memory for localities. The topography of a country seemed to be modelled in relief in his head. Never did any man combine such a memory with a more creative genius. He seemed to extract men, horses and guns from the very bowels of the earth. The distinctive numbers of his regiments, his army service companies, his baggage battalions, were all classified in his brain most marvellously. His memory sufficed for everything. He knew where each one was, when it started, when it should arrive at its destination. His memory was more trustworthy than any staff musters and rolls, but this spirit of orderliness to the end that all should co-operate to achieve his purpose, that all should be created and organized with the final aim in view, did not go beyond that point. All would have been well if the solution of the problems of the campaign could have been secured by gaining two or three battles: he was so completely master of his chessboard that he would certainly have won them. But his creative genius had no knowledge of conserving its forces. Always improvising, in a few days he would consume, exhaust and disorganize by the rapidity of his marches, the whole of what his genius had created. If a thirty-days' campaign did not produce the results of a year's fighting the greater part of

his calculations were upset by the losses he suffered, for everything was done so rapidly and unexpectedly, the chiefs acting under him had so little experience, showed so little care and were, in addition so spoiled by former successes, that everything was disorganized, wasted and thrown away.

The Emperor's genius had proved itself in the achievement of such prodigious successes that to him was left the entire responsibility of winning a battle. It was sufficient to be on the spot in time for the action; after the victory had been won there was certain to be plenty of time to rest and reorganize, so no one cared very much what his losses had been or what he had had to abandon, for it was rare that the Emperor demanded an account. The prompt results of the Italian and Austrian campaigns and the resources those countries offered to the invader spoiled everyone, down to the less important commanders, for more rigorous warfare. The habit of victory cost us dear when we got to Russia and even dearer when we were in retreat; the glorious habit of marching ever forward made us veritable schoolboys when it came to retreating. The Emperor was so used to having his troops at hand and was always so eager to take the offensive that the roads became hopelessly blocked and the columns inextricably confused. In this matter men and horses alike were reduced to a state of exhaustion.

Never was a retreat worse planned, or carried out with less discipline; never did convoys march so badly. Precautionary calculations and dispositions had no place in the arrangements that were made and it was to this lack of forethought that we owed a great part of our disaster. When it came to any retrograde movement the Emperor would take no decision until the very last moment, which was invariably too late. His reasoning powers were never able to gain the mastery over his repugnance to retreat, while his staff, who were far too much in the habit of not doing the slightest thing without the impulse from him who planned everything, took no steps whatever to organize affairs. Shaped and drilled into being no more than an obedient instrument, the staff could do nothing of itself for the general good. The Emperor would

not even agree to the most essential sacrifices to preserve what was undoubtedly indispensable. Throughout that long retreat from Russia he was as uncertain and as undecided on the last day as he had been on the first, although he was in no more doubt as to the imperative necessity of this retreat than was anyone else. Constantly deluding himself with hopes of being able to call a halt and take up position, he obstinately retained an immense amount of material that ultimately caused the loss of everything. He had a wholly incalculable antipathy for any thoughts or ideas about what he disliked. Fortune had so often smiled upon him that he could never bring himself to believe that she might prove fickle.

The Emperor was a quick eater and gulped down his food so hastily that it seemed as though he chewed it very little if at all. Innumerable tales have been told as to his mode of living. The truth is that he only partook of two meals a day. His preferences were for beef or mutton, beans, lentils or potatoes, generally in the form of a salad. It was a rare thing for him to finish a bottle of wine in the day; he preferred Chambertin. After lunch and dinner he took a cup of watered coffee, and this was the only thing he was particular about. In the Egyptian campaign he had acquired the habit of taking it very strong, and he liked Mocha best. During the Russian campaign, even in the retreat, every day he was able to have his wine, his coffee and such food as he was accustomed to having served on his table.

I cannot close my remarks on this campaign without speaking of the King of Naples, who had so much to do with our success and our failure. The bellicose nature of that prince often led him, even unconsciously, into pandering to the Emperor's overpowering passion for going to war; yet he perceived the ill consequences of this and with some people even went so far as to deplore them. General Belliard, chief of his staff, had no illusions on this point; being a man of considerable nobility of character he did not hide his thoughts from the King nor hesitate to give utterance to his forebodings. But the King's best resolutions vanished into thin air the moment he saw the enemy or heard the thunder of a

gun; he was no longer able to curb his enthusiasm. In his imagination he had already gained the victory which his courage assured him was for the taking, and such illusions born of valour were transmitted to staff headquarters, to be turned into reality by the illusions born of genius. Always noble, generous, eager to help anyone, humane towards a vanquished foe, this Prince added to those qualities that distinguish valiant men a real eagerness to be well-spoken of and to pass for one of those heroes of chivalry who used to stretch out so gallantly a helping-hand to those whom they had overthrown. He was not afraid of the Emperor's ill-humour, but if he ventured to tell His Majesty the truth he was repulsed so coldly that he held his tongue. The King's sole aim was to please his master.

No one could have been more obliging than the King of Naples, even to those of whom he might well consider that he had a right to complain. He loved the Emperor, saw his faults and appreciated the consequences they brought in their train, but there was in his character a disposition to flatter, imbibed, no doubt, with his mother's milk, which paralysed his good intentions even more effectually than the influence that the Emperor so long exercised over him. His unfortunate passion for dressing-up made him appear the most gorgeous of sovereigns, the king of fine fellows, the tinsel monarch of a raree-show. His uniforms, his plume, his boots made after an antique pattern, all appeared to him as invaluable accessories in the art of seducing the fair ones. With this paraphernalia he really thought himself the most irresistible of men, though actually he was so handsome that no one needed such trappings less than he did. The Emperor, who thought it all very ridiculous, and told him so loudly and often, was not really put out at a whim that called forth the admiration of the troops all the more in that it attracted the attention of the enemy, and gave the King occasion to brave more danger than anyone else.

I now revert to particulars of what happened in Paris, and the news of the army that came to hand after our return. The Grand Marshal and the Count Lobau arrived forty-

eight hours after the Emperor, as well as Baron Fain.¹ Other officers came in succession, including the Emperor's aides-de-camp who had been sent on various errands. Every day the couriers brought news of the army and the Emperor learned of the disaster of Wilna, which had been abandoned, rather than evacuated, on the 10th.² It is impossible to have any idea of the disorder that had reigned in that city since the entry of the army. The Emperor was overwhelmed with the news, and sent for me at once.

"Well, Caulaincourt," he greeted me, "so the King has left Wilna. He has made no dispositions; the army, even the Guard, have run away before a few Cossacks. The cold has made them all lose their heads and so complete has been the disorder that even without any question of being pursued they have abandoned all the artillery and vehicles³ on the mountain outside Wilna. Never has there been such a rout, such utter stupidity. What a hundred plucky men might have saved by their own exertions has been snatched from before the very noses of thousands of brave lads, and all through Murat's fault. A captain of light infantry would have commanded the army better."

I gave His Majesty the letter from M. de Saluces.⁴ He read it several times, being, I saw, quite unable to give any credence to the despatches sent by the King and the Major-General, upon whom he concentrated all his displeasure. The amazement, amounting to stupefaction, with which the

¹ According to Fain (*Manuscrit de 1815*, I, 7), Duroc and Lobau started from Smorgoni some hours after the Emperor and got to Paris forty-eight hours after Napoleon, as Caulaincourt says. But Fain adds—and he was well situated to know the facts—that the office carriage, in which were the secretaries Fain and Mounier, the engineer cartographer Bacler d'Albe and the surgeon Yvan, did not reach its destination until three days later.

² December 10, 1812.

³ Held up by the ice-covered roads near Ponary, "all the carriages were piled one on the other; part of the treasury was pillaged; caissons, baggage, artillery, all was lost; Ney's rear-guard had to set fire to it all when they came up." (Colonel Frédéric Reboul, *La Campagne de 1815*, I, 73.)

⁴ Andrew Annibal Saluzzo (de Saluces), born at Turin, November 30, 1776, died May 27, 1852, was equerry to the Emperor and in this capacity accompanied the general headquarters to Russia. The reference is probably to one of Saluzzo's reports, as he had taken over the duties of Master of the Horse when Caulaincourt left with the Emperor.

Emperor read this letter to me and recounted the details that he had learned demonstrated most amply that he had been perfectly sincere when he assured me during our journey, and even after our arrival, that he would hold Wilna. His chagrin at the loss of Wilna was all the greater in that he had been so confident that it would be held; for the first few moments after receiving the news he felt the blow more keenly than when he had heard of the loss of Minsk and Borissov,¹ although he had then been obliged to retire between the guns of three armies.² But it was incumbent on the Emperor that he should show a brave face in front of his keenly attentive courtiers; and by way of putting his back to the storm he immediately set about most energetically to take the necessary steps to repair the damage. Continuous arrivals from the army making it impossible to conceal for any length of time the disgraceful particulars of what had taken place, His Majesty gave permission on the morrow for all the letters brought in by the couriers to be distributed to their various destinations. I will now recount what the Emperor told me concerning this event.

On their arrival at Wilna the army commanders lost no time in installing themselves in comfortable houses, resting and getting warm once more. The junior officers and the privates, left to themselves, suffering agonies with the cold which had become more intense than ever and for three days had been more than twenty degrees below zero [C.] also betook themselves to shelter, and left most of their outposts unguarded. The King of Naples, who ought to have been with the advance-guard some leagues from Wilna, was in the city. Everyone followed the King's example and shut himself close within doors; with the result that the Cossacks were able to come right up to the outlying suburbs of the city. The intense cold prevented our troops, who were sheltering in

¹ Tchitchagoff had seized Minsk on November 16 and the bridgehead of Borissov on November 21. "Bonaparte," says Clausewitz (*La Campagne de 1812*, 70), "could have considered himself lucky if, after the loss of Minsk and Borissov, he was able to find any place to cross the Beresina and thence march straight on Wilna."

² Those of Kutusoff, Wittgenstein and Tchitchagoff.

houses or huddled round fires, from getting hold of their arms and so they had to retire before the Cossacks closer into the town itself. Encouraged by these successes, however meagre they might seem, the enemy grew bolder, and sent out detachments to ascertain in what strength we were holding our posts in the suburbs. Meeting with little or no resistance, they began to harass us and increase the disorder that was already reigning. When they saw how successful the Cossacks had been, the Russian infantry also drew closer to the city. A few guns mounted on sledges frightened some of our outposts more seriously than they harmed them; but eventually the confusion in Wilna grew to such proportions that it was decided to evacuate the place.¹

The utter improvidence that had been shown in every direction since the Emperor's departure ended in the loss of everything. Artillery and convoys became inextricably confused on the mountain two leagues from Wilna. The horses had not been re-shod and in any event were so weak that they could not climb the hill and were practically useless. The first vehicles had blocked up the whole road. Fifty courageous men with a few properly organized teams could have saved the situation, for the enemy had not yet entered the town and in any case was not in considerable strength. But the senior officers acted each on his own account, and the headquarters staff laid no plans whatever. The confusion increased with every moment that passed; no one thought of anything but himself, all tried to get out of the muddle by some side path that should lead over the mountain; but the first-comers so completely blocked the road in their vain attempts to climb the hill that those who followed were held up and the whole road was impassable. While this was going on the King, who thought he had forty-eight hours in which to carry out the evacuation, observed how little our troops were disposed to resist the Russian infantry attacks, and

¹ Murat arrived in Wilna at 11 o'clock on the morning of December 8th and started out again on the 9th. "The enemy entered during the 10th as there was nothing in front of him." (Le Lorgne d'Ideville writing to Maret, Gumbinnen, December 18, 1812, published by G. Fabry, *Napoléon, Murat et le roi de Prusse*, 15.)

taking alarm at this he abandoned the town in all haste. From that moment the evacuation became a stampede.

It would be difficult to convey any idea of the confusion that reigned.¹ Not that there was any valid reason for so much haste and alarm, as was shown by the fact that a small infantry squad, left in charge of a post and there forgotten, boldly crossed the entire city an hour and a half after our precipitate departure, and rejoined the main army unmolested by the few parties of enemy troops who had made their way in and were too amazed at their own success to oppose this gallant little party.

The Emperor's carriages, which had reached Wilna safe and sound, followed the artillery and when they reached the mountain shared the common fate. All M. de Saluce's zeal and energy failed to make a passage through the welter of confusion, so he was forced to abandon them. Only sumpter-mules and horses could be saved, and it was very difficult to get even them and a few teams through the blockage. The money of the pay-chest was loaded on horses and not a penny of it was lost. The King and the other generals having gone on ahead no one took the trouble to collect together even a hundred plucky fellows, which was all that was needed to save the situation by arresting the pursuit led by a few Cossacks. Had this been done it would have given time to clear the confusion on the mountain road. The cold was intense, and that day it seemed to have numbed the brains as well as the courage of our troops, who on so many previous occasions had not allowed themselves to be thwarted by difficulties such as these. Woe to those who had no gloves to put on; they ran the risk of losing a finger or two from frost-bite.

The Emperor was profoundly affected by the manner in which Wilna had been abandoned. He could not believe it was true, upsetting as it did all his calculations and contradicting all probabilities. Two days later he learned what had taken place at Kovno and the behaviour of the Guard.² He

¹ See *Mémoires du sergent Bourgogne*, 1896, 232.

² "At two o'clock in the afternoon of the 12th the Guard and the whole crowd that accompanied it for protection, drew near to Kovno. That town, already full of unattached soldiers, thereupon became thronged at every point

spoke to me about it on several occasions, in a tone of real grief. He felt it all the more in that he liked to recall, when speaking of this corps's exemplary behaviour during the retreat, the fine appearance and smartness they had always preserved.

Thus the moment for the most bitter and searching trial had come, when all illusions were dispelled in one devastating moment. Overwhelmed by the catastrophe, the Prince of Neuchâtel fell ill of chagrin and exhaustion. The King of Naples's inability to cope with the situation, said the Emperor, had amazed everyone. Each fresh despatch brought particulars of some fresh misfortune. All the letters from the army accused the King of lack of foresight. To deal with such difficulties, they said, someone was needed with strength of character to rise above all misfortunes and misadventures, and the King, though gallant enough in the heat of action, was in reality the weakest and most undecided of men.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was overwhelmed with despair, reproaching himself with having contributed to the selection of such a leader; but his regrets were too late and could do no good. The nature of the most energetic men, even those of sound common sense who would in other circumstances have triumphed over a host of difficulties, seemed, as the Emperor said, benumbed with cold. Weariness, discouragement, the effects of cold and the fears of being frozen to death were brought to the Emperor's notice in a very marked way. Reports were sent to him concerning various officers of his Guard and even the Artillery who had shown the utmost activity and zeal as far as Wilna, whither they had taken their companies or batteries practically intact and by their general behaviour had merited the commendation of their commanding officers; but when it came to leaving Wilna these same officers, it was reported, refused to go a step further, declaring loudly that they had no more strength and would rather stay and be made prisoners than perish with hunger

and the greatest disorder soon displayed itself. The shops were pillaged and fires broke out in various quarters.' (Marquis de Chambray, *Histoire de l'expédition de Russie*, III, 155.) See also Berthier's letter to the Emperor, from Wirballen, December 16, 1812, published by Colonel Frédéric Reboul, *La Campagne de 1813*, I, 419.

and cold upon the road. Incidents such as these struck the Emperor more forcibly than many losses. He longed, more than I can describe, to have news of the Duke of Bassano,¹ and, above all, for him to arrive in Paris so that he might feel assured that the forged Russian assignats left at Wilna had been destroyed.

"They are quite capable of having forgotten them," he said, "or of having left to someone else the task of destroying them; that person will have tried to make something for himself out of them, and if the Russians find them it will be somewhat more than disagreeable."

The Emperor told me that he knew from a private source that some of these assignats had been circulated since his departure from Wilna and his uneasiness was largely due to what he had heard on this score. I must confess that this piece of confidential information so overwhelmed me at first that I scarcely understood what the Emperor was saying, and he was obliged to repeat his remarks.

As soon as he learned of the evacuation of Wilna the Emperor realized all the consequences that would inevitably follow. The Duchy was imperilled, where would the disorder stop? It was difficult to foresee what would happen, for despatches from the King and the Major-General mentioned no reassuring plans. Ever prompt at coming to a decision as soon as he saw that things had got beyond any possibility of being remedied, the Emperor said:

"It is a torrent and we must let it sweep by. It will stop of itself in a day or two."

He observed that there was all kinds of sickness about and that this retreating movement would be good in that it would remove the troops from infected areas. It was even possible that the Russians would be attacked by sickness themselves and the advance of their army checked. Despite all our misfortunes, the position of our forces on December 21st could give ground for some hopes of seeing an end to this disorder and disorganization, for the army had its supports and what had wrought us

¹ Maret had moved from Wilna to Warsaw, where he arrived in the morning of December 16th. He returned to Paris early in January 1815.

such harm was no doubt equally exhausting to the enemy and seriously detrimental to any offensive movement on his part.

General headquarters¹ were at Königsberg, covered by the 10th Corps stationed at Tilsit. The 1st Corps (Prince of Eckmühl) was at Thorn; the 2nd at Marienburg; the 3rd (Duke of Elchingen) at Elbing; the 4th (Viceroy) at Marienwerder; the 5th at Warsaw; the 6th at Plock; the 7th at Wengrow; the 9th at Danzig.

The Austrians occupied Ostrolenka and Broki.

As I have already said the moment for the heaviest blows had come. The losses of Wilna and the retreat into Prussia were only the prelude. Treason had been waiting the signal given by our latest disasters to force its way into the very ranks of our brave fellows. On December 30th General York, the Prussian, signed a treaty with the Russians and shamefully deserted the Duke of Taranto.² This unparalleled defection uncovered our left and endangered the 10th Corps, which thus found itself threatened by greatly superior forces, as Wittgenstein came up to join the divisions already facing the Duke of Taranto, who had left Mittau on the 19th and was to cross the Niemen on the 29th.³ In these circumstances the King of Naples ordered the army to cross the Vistula and moved his headquarters to Posen.⁴ It was at this juncture that he resigned his command of the army.⁵ The Emperor gave it to the Viceroy. A note to this effect inserted in the *Moniteur* leaves no doubt as to what the Emperor thought of his brother-in-law's desertion in such critical circumstances.⁶

¹ The rallying points had been detailed by Berthier on December 17th. Cf. Colonel F. Reboul, *La Campagne de 1813*, I, 88.

² The Convention of Tauroggen, signed at the mill of Poscherum. The following day the Prussian troops were withdrawn beyond the Niemen. Cf. J. d'Ussel, *La Defection de la Prussie en 1813*, 113.

³ Cf. Macdonald, *Souvenirs*, 184. The Duke of Taranto arrived in Tilsit on December 28th and that same day began to clear the Niemen.

⁴ Murat moved his headquarters from Königsberg to Elbing on January 3rd 1813, and installed it at Posen on January 15th.

⁵ January 16, 1813.

⁶ The Emperor learned of Murat's departure on January 22nd. The *Moniteur* of January 27th published this note: "Owing to indisposition the King of Naples has been obliged to relinquish the command of the army, and has placed it in the hands of the Viceroy. This latter is more accustomed to high administration and enjoys the entire confidence of the Emperor."

The King crossed Germany in disguise and made his way to Naples.¹

One of the first things the Emperor looked into on his return to Paris was the full details of the Malet conspiracy and the degree of blame attaching to M. Frochot, Prefect of the Seine, whose rank as Counsellor of State and the importance of whose position rendered him in the Emperor's eyes more guilty than any other person. His Majesty liked Frochot. The Duke of Bassano, who was his friend, had always represented him as one of the most loyal and devoted of men, and the Emperor considered him very efficient. The memory of this and the confidence he had always placed in him only added to his irritation against this official who, after an inquiry and a note signed by all sections of the Council of State (summoned and sitting separately on purpose to try one of their members), was adjudged as having failed in firmness and decision in carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to him.² Notwithstanding this, no one doubted his attachment to the Emperor, though His Majesty was none the less incensed at his conduct and ingratitude.

"An example must be made," he said. "Not of the man, but of the Counsellor of State. It is time that people learned, if they have forgotten, what it means to observe an oath of loyalty. The principles of that must be finally fixed."

So much importance did the Emperor attach to the conduct of the first magistrate of Paris, as he called him, that he made allusions to it in his reply to the addresses of congratulation offered him on his return by the Senate³ and other bodies.

The Emperor's presence in Paris calmed the liveliest apprehensions. The bustle occasioned by his various arrangements made a diversion and a lively activity was apparent in all quarters. France was one vast workshop, and this moment

¹ He reached Caserta on January 31st.

² The findings of the inquiry were published in the *Moniteur* of December 25th at the same time as the decree by which Frochot was deprived of his functions as a Counsellor of State and Prefect of the Seine. Cf. Pasquier, *Mémoires*, II, 48.

³ "Timid and unworthy soldiers cause a State to lose its independence; but timid and careless magistrates rob the law of its majesty, the throne of its rights, and destroy the entire fabric of social order." (Reply to the address of the Senate, December 20, 1812. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19389.)

must have been the most comforting and happiest in his life, for instead of demanding an account from him, the entire French nation overlooked his reverse and men vied with one another in showing their zeal and devotion. It was as glorious an example of the French character as it was a personal triumph for the Emperor, who with amazing energy directed all the resources of which his genius was capable into the organization and guidance of this great national endeavour.

Things seemed to come into existence by enchantment. The millions of money in the private treasury and coming from the Extraordinary Domain were taken from the Tuileries' cellars and lent to the State Treasury.¹ The Emperor had no thought but for France; his mind was solely occupied in co-ordinating everything that might help her to appear, before long, once again in the theatre of war, with sufficient force at her disposal to enable her to discuss without undue eagerness the terms of an honourable peace.

The Emperor made an outward show of being actuated by a desire for peace, and many people were inclined to profit by the similar anxiety for peace that must have prevailed in Austria. A cessation of warfare was clearly so necessary for everyone that it was impossible to doubt the feasibility of bringing it about if the Emperor were moderate in his views; and that moment seemed the most propitious for gaining peace at the cost of a few sacrifices. It must be observed (and history will, no doubt, take note of the circumstance) that nothing can give a more just notion of the strength of character and tenacity of purpose with which everyone credited the Emperor than the fact that despite our reverses, despite the success of the Russians and the treachery of the Prussians, the public opinion of the Emperor's mettle was such that it was generally supposed that any difficulties in the way of moderation in the terms of peace would come from

¹ The Extraordinary Treasury amounted to 325 millions, of which 267 millions were tied up in loans to the cities of Bordeaux and Paris, or to various States. There remained, therefore, 58 millions. As to the Privy Treasury, forming Napoleon's personal fortune, it amounted to 155 millions, of which 35 millions were tied up in various ways. In the Tuileries' cellars, therefore, there actually existed 158 millions in gold.

him rather than from Russia, although her pretensions and demands for vengeance were likely to increase, as her army, having passed over the frontier on to foreign soil, was no longer a charge upon her and the need for treating for peace was correspondingly less urgent.

The King of Prussia had greatly disapproved of the conduct of his generals and the troops. He gave orders to arrest and court-martial Generals York and Massenbach¹ and at the same time renewed his protestations of fidelity to the Emperor.² But it was easy to see that the conduct of Prussia would depend on the success of the Russians and the secret plans of Austria. The solution to the problem lay in the attitude Austria would adopt; according to the Emperor she was the nearest to the menace of the Russian Colossus and consequently ought to rise in arms *en masse*. The Emperor kept on repeating this to me as though trying to make himself believe it. In any case, the disposition of intelligent opinion in France reassured him as to the outcome of all the plans that were afoot. He enumerated with complaisance all the means that he would have at his disposal in three months' time, calculating that he would be able to reckon on 800,000 under arms. Once this number had been realized, with the certainty of arming and equipping them, and the rest being left to his genius, he was really convinced that he would recapture the empire of the world, reckoning on his good fortune and the prospects of what the future would bring forth.

Nevertheless, he realized the necessity of giving utterance to views of a pacific nature, as much to encourage the troops

¹ Christian Massenbach, born at Schmalkalden (Hesse-Cassel) in 1768, died at Bialystock, November 27, 1827, Quartermaster-General commanding the cavalry of the Prussian contingent under the command of York. Massenbach, who had been at Tilsit, did not hesitate to follow York. (Clausewitz, *La campagne de 1812*, 193.)

² "In the absence of other information the Prussian Government considers that it should follow the line of conduct that has been observed up to the present, and considers the act of York as that of an insubordinate soldier." (D'Ussell, *La defection de la Prusse*, 155.) On January 4, 1813, the King of Prussia sent Prince Hatzfeld to Paris to express "To His Majesty the Emperor the King's sentiments and to prove to Europe what those sentiments were." By a letter to Murat the King announced to the French army that he was dismissing York and giving the command of his troops to General Kleist.

and tranquillize public opinion in France as to prevent Austria, and even more urgently Prussia, from taking any extreme steps. Feeling the need of gaining time the Emperor convoked a special Council¹ to which I was summoned as well as M. de Talleyrand. This last, the Arch-Chancellor, Duke Decrès and I, were for open overtures to Austria, who had already offered her services for the concluding of peace. The day before the Council I told the Emperor that it would be necessary to agree with Austria at once as to the lines on which a general peace could be established, stipulating what demands would be made for offering compensation in the event of peace only applying to the Continental Powers. Moderation such as this, I told him, will keep the alliance of Austria and may even lead to peace itself; it was also calculated to please Austria and restore confidence in everyone. The Emperor, on the contrary, could see in such a course of action nothing but an avowal of weakness that would make us appear in a more embarrassed situation than we really found ourselves, thereby not only rendering Russia more exigent in her demands but at the same time increasing the pretensions Austria would put forward if she thought us really embarrassed.

When the Council met, these questions were put before it in the most ambiguous manner. Only the most insignificant documents were read. As it was a matter of indifference to the Emperor if the discussion got excited or even if it passed any resolution, the talking was so general that it was difficult to get in a word. This Council was to no purpose in itself, but its composition was such as to give it the desired political effect. The *Moniteur* announced to Europe as well as to France that it had been summoned, and this was all the Emperor wanted. In the end, as was his custom, he acted on his own judgment and his ministers carried out his orders.

The Emperor thought he would be able to lull Austria with hopes of peace while he was hurriedly organizing his

¹ This Council was held at the Tuileries at 8 o'clock on January 5rd. It consisted of Caulaincourt, Talleyrand, Cambacérès, Duroc, Maret, Champagny and the two Councillors of State for Foreign Affairs, La Besnardière and d'Hauterive. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1815*, I, 151.)

WINTER ACTIVITIES

army. He imagined she might seize the opportunity to withdraw from the struggle, thereby obliging him to rely entirely on his own forces, and his foresight did not attempt to see further than this possibility. He was even doubtful whether Austria had enough strength of purpose to make the decision of withdrawing her contingent if she saw that he himself was taking vigorous measures. He stubbornly refused to believe that Austria might be more apprehensive of the Russians than of him, and was consequently far from admitting that she had the energy to declare herself his enemy.

After the dismissal of the Council it was long before the Emperor spoke to me on political matters, so I confined myself to the active reorganization of his carriage service. I succeeded in persuading him to alter the system of employing heavy wagons, both in the army and in his personal train, and changed the organization of artillery and service transports. He accordingly appointed a commission, with myself as one of the members, to consider the subject and we decided to make use of small wagons, known as "comtoises," fitted with tilts for the driver.¹

The winter passed in these activities. There was mourning in every family but hope in every heart, for the Emperor was in Paris and the preparations he was making inspired reassurance. The Court was very serious. The remnants of the army had retreated into Prussia and every succeeding courier brought news of some fresh retirement. Such men as had survived privations, rigours of climate, and dangers of warfare, as soon as they found themselves in easier circumstances fell sick from eating unwisely. The hospitals of Gumbinnen, Insterburg, Königsberg, Marienburg and Thorn were full of these unfortunates. It was the same with the horses as with the men; they were made as ill by abundance as they had been by dearth. The Emperor's saddle-horses, of which only four or five had been lost during the whole retreat, diminished in numbers sensibly after leaving Gum-

¹ Cf. Napoleon to Lacuée, Fontainebleau, January 25, 1813 (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19504, on the reorganization of military vehicles): "Comtoise vehicles are light and, in a word, such as we had in the last campaign."

binnen. Even horses of the Emperor's rank,¹ which were therefore the best tended and seemed in good condition, fell dead on the march. In less than a fortnight twenty chargers were lost.² The cavalry and artillery suffered the heaviest losses. Even men of the Emperor's household fell ill of malignant fever.

The Prince of Neuchâtel, a chronic invalid, insisted on returning to Paris and the Emperor gave his consent. It can have afforded the Prince but little consolation to know that he had been partly responsible for giving the command of the army to the King of Naples to whom, in common with everyone else, he attributed a great part of our misfortunes. He told me this with the utmost frankness on his return to Paris. The Viceroy, on the other hand, was indefatigable. Always in the midst of his troops, he encouraged them and succeeded in rallying the scattered remnants of the army. Confidence began to be born anew. Neither France nor the brave fellows who fought her battles will ever forget that this young hero never despaired of his country or the army that had been entrusted to him, or that he stayed with it in the midst of contagion and paved the way for our victories in the spring.

While these things were happening in Germany, Austria was anxious to profit by anything that might lead to peace without compromising her with the Emperor; her first principal object was to get the Russians out of her territories, then to dispense with furnishing a contingent of troops and supporting the Poles who, relying on the Austrian army, had

¹ Those destined to be ridden by the Emperor.

² The saddle-horses of the Emperor were organized in ten brigades of thirteen horses each, in addition to which there were two battle-chargers and one horse for the Emperor's recreation. A statement of the Emperor's saddle-horses present with the army on January 31, 1815, countersigned by Baron de Saluces at Posen on that date, and preserved in the Caulaincourt archives, indicates that thirty-two horses had been taken to Russia for the Emperor, which included two more than establishment. At that date twenty-two still remained in the army. These were Coquet, Lutzelberg, Zaire, Emir, Louve, Tauris, Judith, Madrid, Vineux (very much enfeebled by the campaign), Licorne, Turcoman, Roitelet, Leonore, Moscow, Warsaw, Gonzalve, Jardinière, Montevideo, Curde, Cid (very tired), Embelli, Pingon. One horse had been sent back to Paris, Pimpant. On January 31, 1815, nine had died between Moscow and Posen, Hector, Courtois, Bavaois, Favorite, Friedland, Gentile, Leopard, Javotte, Linotte.

THE NEGOTIATIONS OF 1813

retreated on Cracow where they were indulging in dreams of the independence of their country and imbuing the Galicians with similar notions. Observing that the Emperor was getting ready, and that in consequence something had to be done, as he was only trying to gain time till he could decide the matter by force of arms, Austria followed up her original overtures for peace by sending Count Bubna¹ to sound His Majesty's feelings and find out his views as to a general or a continental peace.

In the meantime Count Narbonne went to Vienna as French ambassador.² The Emperor thought that his name, his manners and his relations with Prince Schwarzenberg and Count Metternich would ensure a good reception for him, and that his intelligence would please the Emperor of Austria. It was also hoped that he would be able to change in our favour the unfriendly attitude that society in Vienna had adopted towards us. But the Austrians regretted M. Otto³ and were displeased at his being recalled, especially when they saw that the new ambassador brought with him nothing more positive or conducive to peace than his predecessor had offered. At Paris the Emperor expressed a wish to see Prince Schwarzenberg, with whom, he said, he could soon come to an agreement on every point. The Cabinet in Vienna had already called up men and was still doing so. Not reckoning that we should be ready so soon, they thought to gain time and be prepared; and not understanding that there were many things that could not be communicated to them by M. de Bubna or M. de Narbonne, the Austrian Government did not hurry itself to send Prince Schwarzenberg; when at last he did arrive he was greatly astonished to find the Emperor on the point of departure.⁴

¹ Ferdinand, Count Bubna de Littitz, born at Zainersk (Bohemia) on November 26, 1768, died at Milan, June 6, 1825, Chamberlain to the Emperor of Austria and Field-Marshal Lieutenant. He had his first audience with the Emperor on December 31, 1812.

² Narbonne was appointed Ambassador to Vienna, March 5, 1815.

³ Louis Guillaume Otto de Mosloy, born at Korb (Grand Duchy of Baden), August 7, 1754, died at Paris, November 9, 1817, had been Ambassador at Vienna since 1809.

⁴ Prince Schwarzenberg arrived in Paris April 7th and had his first audience with the Emperor on the 9th.

He was received by His Majesty, had long interviews with him and the Duke of Bassano, and left Paris with nothing but vague words. In his turn he would have committed himself no further had not the Duke of Bassano provoked him beyond endurance in the course of a private conversation, by representing Austria as faithless and even dishonoured in taking advantage of our reverses and the state of embarrassment we were supposed to be in, to break the alliance and shatter the good relations that had been established by the marriage. Prince Schwarzenberg had been pressed by the Emperor and by the Duke of Bassano to express himself openly and say outright if the alliance still held good and if we could count on the contingent being furnished. In turn, he tried to make us state our positive views as to a continental or general peace; but the ambiguity of the answers he received and, even more definitely, the haste of the Emperor's departure, made it clear to him that we wanted to settle these points by force of arms before the enemy should reach the banks of the Rhine, and that above all else we wanted to put off any mediation on the part of his Court, as that mediation would, inevitably destroy the alliance.

In the private conversation to which I alluded, Prince Schwarzenberg did not hesitate to answer the Duke of Bassano's taunts by saying that the interests of the States of Austria, their future, the happiness and tranquillity of the entire world demanded supreme sacrifices,¹ and that if the peace of Europe depended on a marriage being annulled, Austria would not hesitate to annul it. He told the Emperor that in any case the contingent would be at his disposal. He ought, in strict truth, to have added the words "at the present moment," as the armistice concluded with the Russians, besides being for a definite period,² stipulated for notice of its denunciation, and Austria had no reason to fear that the Emperor could dispose of the contingent at the moment. She

¹ Cf. Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, VIII, 81.

² An allusion to the Armistice of Zeyes, signed on January 30, 1813, between Schwarzenberg and the Russians; but Caulaincourt is wrong in speaking of a definite period mentioned in this Armistice, for it was concluded for an unlimited term. Cf. Martens, *Recueil des traités*, III, 89.

SETS OUT ON GERMAN CAMPAIGN

had time to decide and declare her intentions in the interval that would elapse between the denunciation of the armistice and the renewal of hostilities. The cabinet had already decided to withdraw the contingent for the Emperor's service, but as he was unable to make any use of it the Court of Vienna judged it better to wait and fit in with his plans.

The Emperor listened to this and very justly retorted that it was only the handing over of the contingent that gave colour to the alliance in the eyes of Europe. He was desirous, therefore, of keeping it at all costs, anyhow in appearance; but it was precisely this appearance that we lacked and in that, probably, lay the cause of our inability to obtain those frank explanations which would no doubt have led us to moderate our demands until a basis of peace were possible.

If Austria had spoken up more firmly during the winter, the Emperor, who had always desired to see her irresolute and deceived as to his real intentions, would have been more moderate in his proposals the more she was threatening in her attitude. He was only belligerent because he thought that a victory would range Austria on his side. Partly from weakness and partly because her armament was not yet complete, Austria desired to gain time. That was also the Emperor's object, but in his case it was to make use of their army. No one was entirely deceived. The Emperor, certain of a successful issue, reckoned that in the event of a reverse it would not be to Austria's interest to make her position worse. So he felt himself able to try the luck of war, for he ought to have good chances of success by being early on the battlefield. He realized, moreover, that we needed a victory to wipe out our defeat and enable us to hold once more the language proper to the might of France.

Our new army corps were formed. Bodies of troops had already crossed the Rhine;¹ the remnants of the army of Russia, rallied and reorganized, were nevertheless obliged to retreat before forces that increased in strength with every day that passed. But our own strength was also on the increase. The Emperor's impending departure had been announced

¹ A hundred cohorts of the National Guard were organized in 1812.

since March and it became increasingly necessary as the enemy, already master of Dresden,¹ was on the Saale by the time the Emperor could avail himself of all the means that France had placed at his disposal with so lavish a hand. Only the Guard had a few squadrons at full strength; the rest of our cavalry was at the base, except for a few weak detachments formed of conscripts who had been mounted while still on the march and debouched at Mayence. As for the infantry, there were a few bodies of men who had been left in France and had served the colours for a year or so, the remainder were fresh from their villages. The best trained had been issued with muskets a month previously, but the greater number had only been armed since their march to Mayence, that is, between twenty-four hours and a week. Many only received their muskets when they got to Erfurt or upon the road on the day before the Battle of Lützen.

The Emperor had left Paris on April 15th,² and stayed in Mayence until the 25th,³ to send forward such troops as had arrived, to organize and arrange for the supply of such stores as were lacking. He would have liked to have had another fortnight in order to collect the cavalry and instil a little discipline and spirit into the troops, but this was impossible as the men were sent forward in successive detachments of a hundred as the depots sorted and clothed them. As they crossed the Rhine our men were nothing but an organized mob. But the advance of the Prusso-Russian forces which threatened the Rhine, where they hoped to arrive before we were in strength to prevent them, gave the Emperor no time for deliberation. He marched on the enemy with an army composed of officers and privates who had not so much as set eyes on one another forty-eight hours previously, of sergeants and corporals who had only been given their stripes the evening before, and with them won the Battle of Lützen.⁴

¹ Reynier's Corps, pressed by Wittgenstein, evacuated Dresden on March 26th.

² Napoleon set out from Saint Cloud at 4 o'clock in the morning of Thursday, April 15th.

³ The Emperor reached Mayence at midnight April 16th-17th, and left there at 8 o'clock in the evening of the 24th for Erfurt by way of Frankfort.

⁴ May 2, 1813.

INDEX

- Abo, interview of, 177 *n.*, 183 *n.*;
 Russian valuables sent to, 255 *n.*
- Aboukir Bay, battle of, 504 *n.*
- Abrantès, Duke of. *See* Junot, General.
- Acre, 505
- Aland, 39 *n.*
- Albini, Chevalier d', 550
- Aldobrandini, Prince, 83 *n.*
- Alexander I, Tsar of Russia, his esteem
 for writer, 17, 21, 112-15; at Tilsit,
 20, 41; at Erfurt, 20-58, 42-52,
 540-1, 544-5; and Austria, 21-5,
 35-7, 418; anxious for peace, 22-5,
 27, 52, 178-9; aims of, at Erfurt, 52-
 33, 44-5; and evacuation of Prussia,
 32, 35-6, 42-3, 540; and Napoleon,
 34, 37, 46, 48-50; and remarriage
 of Napoleon, 50-2, 75-4; visits
 Duchess of Courland, 52; and annex-
 ation of Oldenburg, 55 *n.*, 63, 428;
 on threatening attitude of Napoleon,
 55-6, 60, 63, 65, 72, 110-13;
 Napoleon's grievances against, 57-8,
 66-7, 71, 85, 531; Napoleon on, 71,
 128-9, 138, 179, 268, 277, 288, 418,
 427-8, 452, 444, 539-40; and con-
 fiscation of neutral vessels, 59, 89,
 97, 112; writer's praise of, 67; on
 result of invasion of Russia, 68-70,
 122, 425; Narbonne sent to, 107,
 111-13, 129; Francis on, 109; de-
 mands reason of invasion, 128;
 refuses to see Lauriston, 129; leaves
 army, 137; calls Russia to arms, 137,
 174; ignores Napoleon's overtures,
 176, 184, 236-7, 249, 255, 260,
 268-9, 275, 297, 425; in alliance
 with English, 176, 177 *n.*, 179; at
 Abo, 177 *n.*, 183 *n.*; Cossack soldier
 on, 188; sends valuables from Peters-
 burg, 253; "opens campaign," 278,
 297, 317; forbids armistice, 278;
 aide-de-camp of, 308, 310-11; and
 House of Brandenburg, 436; and
 Spain, 458; and expedition to India,
 485; illicit passion of, 539; child-
 lessness of, 539
- Amarante, 554
- America, revolt of Spanish colonies in,
 445, 531, 555-4. *See also* United
 States.
- Amiens, Peace of, 529-30
- Amodru, Napoleon's outrider, 411, 473,
 534, 552, 559-60
- Amsterdam, 82
- Andréossy, General, Ambassador in
 Vienna, 26 *n.*; Ambassador to Tur-
 key, 106, 107 *n.*, 177-8
- Anna Pavlowna, Grand Duchess, 51 *n.*
- Anspach, 72 *n.*
- Antwerp, 81
- Arago, François, 585 *n.*
- Aranjuez, rebellion at, 446 *n.*
- Arapiles, battle of, 191 *n.*
- Archangel, English admitted to, 129;
 valuables sent to, 255 *n.*
- Arenberg, Duchess of, 452 *n.*
- Argentine, 443 *n.*
- Artois, Count of, 508, 527
- Aubry, M., 500
- Auerstädt, 546
- Augereau, General, 338-9, 578 *n.*
- Augustowo, 416, 469 *n.*
- Austerlitz, 437
- Austria, threatening attitude of, 21,
 24-6, 34, 56, 48, 541; relations with
 Russia, 22-3, 27, 54-7, 42-3, 615;
 and subjugation of Spain, 31; and
 conference of Erfurt, 26, 33, 47-9,
 540; and Continental System, 38;
 and "treaty of concert," 39 *n.*; war
 with, 53, 66, 69; terms of peace
 with, 60-1, 70, 94 *n.*; Napoleon's
 matrimonial alliance with, 73-4,
 618; offensive and defensive alliance
 with, 86, 100, 107 *n.*; and loss of
 Galicia, 94-5, 432, 433 *n.*; offers to
 mediate with Russia, 104, 109-10;
 and war with Russia, 132, 174, 613;
 an undependable ally, 257, 613-19;

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

Austria—continued.

- effect of reverses on, 417; and re-establishment of Poland, 418, 452-4; and English monopoly, 440-1; signs Convention of Fontainebleau, 451 n.; and Campo Formio, 501; recognizes French Republic, 501-2; plans of, 613, 618-19; anxious for peace, 616-17; armistice with Russia, 618 n.
- Avignon, 581
- Bacler d'Albe, General, 411 n., 604 n.
- Badeu, 462
- Bagowouth, General, 280-2
- Bagratiou, Prince, position of, on flank, 124, 126, 127 n., 135-6; commands Russian Second Army, 126 n.; Davout cuts off retreat of, 156-7, 146; makes for Smolensk, 157, 141 n., 152, 161; escape of 145, 147; at Salta-Nowka, 146-7; at Moskowa, 194
- Bailly de Monthyon, Count, 156
- Balachoff, General, 125, 127-8, 150-1, 176, 255
- Baraguay d'Hilliers, General, 267, 303 n.; at Yelna, 288, 322, 338; retires to Smolensk, 355; disgrace of, 359 n., 346
- Barb  -Marbois, Marquis de, 489
- Barclay de Tolly, General, 528; commands right wing, 126 n.; and propaganda to French Army, 137-8; refuses to give battle, 141 n., 186; at Smolensk, 161 n., 162-3; has entire responsibility, 174-5; Napoleon writes to, 176; Russian complaints against, 186; superseded by Kutusoff, 186; Napoleon on, 426-7
- Barras, Viscount de, 504, 507
- Bassano, Duchess of, 100, 103, 427, 465, 467
- Bassano, Duke of. *See* Maret, H.-B.
- Bausset, Louis Fran  ois de, 190, 247; gout of, 343, 398
- Bautzen, 534; battle of, 599
- Bavarian Corps, 399
- Baylen, Capitulation at, 457-8; articles of, 591-2
- Bayonne, Charles IV and Ferdinand at, 25-4, 455; Junta of, 24; French troops at, 450 n.
- Beauharnais, Josephine de. *See* Josephine, Empress.
- Beauharnais, St  phanie de, 45 n.
- Beauvau, Prince Charles de, 290-1, 545
- Becquey, Fran  ois Louis, 508
- Belitchef, Lieutenant-General, 196
- Bellegarde, M. de, 501 n.
- Belliard, General, 244; on state of cavalry, 144, 152
- Belluno, Duke of. *See* Victor, Marshal.
- B  ranger, aide-de-camp to Murat, 279 n.
- Berckheim, General, 380 n.; brigade of, 389
- Beresina, the, 318-19; crossing of, 372-3, 575, 578, 383-92, 426; loss of bridge over, 578-9, 380-1; Corbineau's route over, 580, 382-4; stragglers at crossing of, 386, 391-2; wagons bogged in marshes of, 387; battle of, 389, 391, 426; burning of bridges over, 392 n.
- Berg, Grand Duke of. *See* Murat, Marshal.
- Berlin, peace negotiations in, 448
- Bernadotte, King of Sweden, seeks to appropriate Norway, 40 n.; Napoleon on, 106, 177, 569; makes peace with Russia and England, 177 n.
- Berthemy, Colonel, 277 n., 292 n.
- Berthier, Marshal (Prince of Neuch  tel and Major-General), 276, 292-3, 298-9, 321, 402, 404, 599; at State ball, 83 n.; arranges rations of troops, 118 n.; on banks of Niemen, 120, 121 n.; at dinner to Balachoff, 130; tries to pacify writer, 153; Napoleon's harshness to, 155-6, 190 n.; tells unpalatable truths, 156-7, 158 n., 183, 222 n., 262; before Smolensk, 164-6; at Valutina, 167-8; writes to Bignon, 173; writes to Barclay, 176; carriage of, 190; at Moskowa, 192, 194, 199-200; and advance on Moscow, 204-6; advises departure from Moscow, 223, 257; receives letter from Schwarzenberg, 257-8; mistress of, 258 n.; instructs Victor, 266; writes to Kutusoff, 277, 292 n.; camp of, 284 n.; and evacuation of Moscow, 288; always near Emperor, 302; advises Napoleon, 303-4; and violence of Napoleon, 308-10; letters of, on conduct of retreat, 324-5 n.; and Davout's abandonment of Ney, 361, 365-6; advises appointment of Murat, 404, 409, 608, 616; and departure of Napoleon,

INDEX

- Berthier, Marshal—*continued*.
 409; and arrest of Enghien, 461,
 463; despatch from, 558; illness of,
 608; returns to Paris, 616
 Beschenkowitschi, battle of, 159
 Besnardière, Jean Baptiste de la, 565
 Bessarabia, 107 n.
 Bessières, Marshal (Duke of Istria), 129,
 165, 298, 300; at dinner to Balachoff, 130-2; sent to Desna, 240-5;
 forbidden to converse with enemy,
 244-5; advises Napoleon, 304; and
 Napoleon's departure, 409; Napoleon
 on, 543-4
 Beurnonville, General de, 447 n.
 Bieloï, 276
 Bieniça, 406, 408
 Bignon, Baron, 175, 465
 Billard, General, 390 n.
 Binet, Jacques Philippe Marie, 585 n.
 Blanmont, General, 590
 Bobr, 372 n., 377, 378 n., 380 n.
 Bolivia, 443 n.
 Bonaparte, Charles, 499-500
 Bonaparte, Jerome. *See* Jerome Bonaparte, King of Westphalia.
 Bonaparte, Joseph. *See* Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain.
 Bonaparte, Letizia, 499, 564
 Bonaparte, Louis. *See* Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland.
 Bonaparte, Lucien, 500
 Bonaparte family, origin of, 499
 Borgo, Posso di, 500
 Borissow, Tchitchagoff marches on,
 371-2; skirmish at, 371 n., 578;
 Grand Army at, 373, 386; defence of
 bridge at, 374; loss of, 378, 381;
 recaptured by French, 380 n.; Napoleon
 at, 384 n.
 Borodino, 190, 194, 196 n., 202 n.;
 battle of, *see* Moskowa, battle of.
 Borowsk, road to, 293, 303-4; Napoleon
 at, 294; Doctorov marches on,
 296-7; temperature at, 320
 Borozdine, General, 218
 Borrelli, General de, 167
 Boulogne, 81; incident in camp at, 568
 Bourbon, Maria Teresa de, 452 n.
 Bourbons, favourable opportunity for,
 105 n.; in Spain, 445, 459; Talleyrand
 and, 459-60; Napoleon's treatment of,
 464; Barras and, 507; agents of,
 508-9
 Bourrienne, Louis Antoine de, 594
 Boyer, General, 553
 Brazil, Portuguese court in, 454, 459
 Brentano, Baroness, 598 n.
 Brest-Litowsk, 251 n., 373 n., 379 n.
 Breuning, General de, 201 n.
 Brillowo, 586-8, 595-4
 Briquerville, M. de, 569
 Brocki, 610
 Bronikowski, General, 568 n., 571 n.
 Bronitsoui, 259 n.
 Broussier, General, 294-5
 Brune, Marshal, 593
 Bubna de Littitz, Count, 617
 Bucharest, Peace of, 106 n., 107 n.,
 177 n.
 Bug, River, 251 n., 265 n.
 Buntzlau, 497-8
 Bursay, Mme Aurorc, 245 n.
 Cacciorna, Count de, 598 n.
 Cadoudal, Georges, 462; plot of, 464 n.
 Cambacères, Arch-Chancellor (Prince
 of Parma), 350-1, 556, 562, 586 n.,
 592 n.; and arrest of Enghien, 461,
 463; Napoleon on, 406, 487; and
 Napoleon's return, 564; and question
 of peace, 614
 Campo Formio, Treaty of, 501-2, 505 n.
 Canisy, Mme de, writer and, 15 n.,
 18; exiled from court, 56, 77-8;
 Napoleon's interest in, 79; permitted
 to return to Paris, 87
 Canonville, M. de, 203 n.
 Capelle, M. de, 104 n.
 Capitulation, decree concerning, 592 n.
 Carcano, Josephine, 258 n.
 Caroline Bonaparte, Queen of Naples,
 569; and Metternich, 115
 Carrere Brigade, 279 n.
 Carteaux, M., 500
 Carvillon de Vandoul, Denis-Simon,
 447 n.
 Cassel, 551 n.
 Castanos, General, 458 n.
 Catherine the Great, Empress of
 Russia, 130, 432
 Catherine Pavlowna, Grand Duchess,
 51 n.
 Caulaincourt, Armand de (Duke of
 Vicenza), 5; Napoleon's esteem for,
 5-6, 79; Ambassador to Russia, 5-6,
 19-21, 29-30, 53-7; duties of, as
 Master of the Horse, 5, 19, 81, 85,
 250 n., 284-5, 303; suspected of
 sympathy with Russians, 6, 54, 56,

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

Caulaincourt—*continued.*

62, 86-7, 98, 130-1; spurious *Souvenirs* of, 6; history of Memoirs of, 6-8; and arrest of Enghien, 7, 462, 464 *n.*; on his Memoirs, 13-15; refuses Russian embassy, 15-18; and marriage, 15-16; at Erfurt, 20 *et seq.*; urges moderation to Napoleon, 22-9; declines Foreign Ministry, 29, 564-5; and Napoleon's divorce, 50-2; and Duke of Courland, 52; pleads for recall, 53-4; in disfavour, 54, 56, 78-9, 81, 83-4, 247; explains Russian view to Napoleon, 58-76; and *William Gustave*, 59 *n.*; signs Polish Convention, 61 *n.*; suggests means of healing breach with Russia, 74-5; refuses to act as intermediary, 77-8, 89, 97; slights suffered by, 85-84, 130; seeks to resign, 87, 132-3; on formation of great buffer state, 94-6, 433; Napoleon provokes to anger, 130-3; visits hospitals, 147-8; *Ségur* on, 158 *n.*; upholds Alexander, 178-9; death of brother of, 198, 205, 249-50; and burning of Moscow, 218-19, 221-2; courier service of, 230-1, 245, 258; prepares for cold weather, 234-5, 405, 414; befriends Russian refugees, 247; in Moscow, 248; refuses to go to Petersburg, 252-4; on dangers of stay in Moscow, 262, 269; pleads for Wintzingerode, 310-11; and Narishkin, 312-13; on dangers of retreat, 317, 319-20; consulted by Napoleon, 318-19, 346, 375, 403; travels on foot, 320, 395, 567; reorganizes Napoleon's carriages, 345; loses aide-de-camp, 351, 377; accompanies Napoleon on journey to Paris, 372, 404, 411 *et seq.*, 472 *et seq.*, 536 *n.*; and Napoleon's horses, 376 *n.*; visits Oudinot's kitchen, 396; arranges journey to Paris, 403, 405-7, 415-16, 473, 492, 494; his frankness to Napoleon, 408-9, 418-19, 429-50, 433-4, 436-7, 468-9, 587-8; in Wilna, 415-14; notes conversations of Napoleon, 470-1, 492, 535, 546; and M. de Pradt, 475-5; and order for dismissal of de Pradt, 478-80; lacks funds, 492; and German postmasters, 494-5, 497; on continuance of retreat, 509-10; jealousy towards

543; and incident of delayed horses, 548-9; reception of, in Paris, 561-4; house of, 564 *n.*; asked to take over Foreign Affairs, 564-5; effect of sledge journey on, 588-9; and Duroc, 595; at special Council, 614; reorganizes military vehicles, 615
Caulaincourt, General Auguste de, 150 *n.*, 195 *n.*; appointed commandant of headquarters, 150; investigates burning of towns, 180; at Moskowa, 195, 197; death of, 198-9, 249; aides-de-camp of, 249-50; Napoleon on, 250
Caulaincourt, Augustine-Amicie de, 538 *n.*
Cessac, Lacuée de, 80 *n.*, 570, 587
Chabrol, M. de, 331 *n.*, 524 *n.*
Chakovskoi, General, 356 *n.*
Cham, Captain, 250 *n.*
Champagny, Count of, 46 *n.*, 53 *n.*, 449, 457 *n.*, 614 *n.*
Charles IV, King of Spain, abdication of, 23, 446 *n.*; stupidities of, 25, 446, 455; favourite of, 446, 450; and Napoleon, 449, 453; receives title of Emperor, 451; at Bayonne, 455-7; fears his son, 456
Charles of Baden, Grand Duke, 45 *n.*
Charlotte, Princess, 452 *n.*
Charpentier, General, 337
Chasseloup-Laubat, General de, 169-170
Chasteigner, Captain Alexander Armand de, 250 *n.*
Chasteigner, René de, 250 *n.*
Château-Thierry, 559 *n.*
Chauveau, Colonel, 584
Chevreuse, Mme de, 526
Chile, 443 *n.*
Christin, M., 404 *n.*
Cisalpine Republic, 501
Claparède, General, 281, 350 *n.*
Clarke, General, 586 *n.*; and Malet's conspiracy, 329-31, 335, 495, 555; Napoleon on, 495, 570
Cleves, 72 *n.*
Code Napoléonien, 487, 519
Coessin, M., 585 *n.*
Collin, M., 585 *n.*
Compans, General, 194; division of, 145, 146 *n.*, 191 *n.*, 193 *n.*, 194 *n.*
Compère, General, 201 *n.*
Compiègne, 81
"Comtoises," 615

INDEX

- Concordat, First, 575, 578, 582 n.;
Second, 575 n.; of December 19,
1516, 576 n.
- Constant, M., 407, 411, 492 n.
- Constantine, Grand Duke, 174
- Constantinople, 72; Caulaincourt in, 5;
Russian desire for, 485; Seven Towers
at, 505
- Continental System, 58, 47, 78, 89,
110; Russia accused of evading,
57-60, 64, 66, 72, 88, 99, 129, 485,
551; and French sale of licences,
58, 65, 97; Alexander on French
evasion of, 112-15; Murat evades,
116; estranges Sweden, 178; Napo-
leon on, 420-2; inclusion of Penin-
sula in, 450
- Corbinau, General, 381; crosses Bere-
sina, 380, 382-4; and construction
of bridge, 384-6
- Cordova, 592 n.
- Corfu, 440
- Corsica, 499
- Cossacks, 187-8, 505, 401, 428; skir-
mishes with, 120-1, 123, 142-3, 152,
182-3, 255 n., 278, 323; harry
foragers, 160, 184, 252, 258, 260,
270, 566; Platow's, 160 n.; burn evac-
uated towns, 180-1, 188; prisoner
interviewed by Napoleon, 185-8;
deceive Murat, 211, 214-15, 226,
258-44, 256; Polish, 230, 259, 268,
270-1, 318, 344, 397, 401, 478, 481,
510; interdict on *pourparlers* with,
243-4; in rear of French Army,
258-9, 523 n.; in Moscow, 260;
delay couriers, 261, 292, 294; pre-
cautionary measures against, 270,
273, 304, 524-5; capture couriers,
274; at Winkovo, 282; from the
Don, 289; near Ghorodnia, 296;
Napoleon's danger from, 298-301,
305; at battle of Wiasma, 323; harry
retreating army, 324-5, 356, 345,
349, 360, 371; at Borisow, 378;
at Studianka, 388; at Kamen,
393; stragglers organize themselves
against, 397; rob stragglers of clothes,
400-i; raid Oschmiana, 412; in
Wilna, 605
- Couriers, 236, 245; establishment of
service of, 250-1; Napoleon's de-
pendence on, 231, 258-9; escort
needed for, 258; delayed by Cos-
sacks, 258, 261, 292, 294; cut off,
263; capture of, 274-5; functions
of, 552 n.
- Courland, Duchess of, 52, 101
- Courland, Duke Peter of, 52, 53 n.
- Cracow, 617
- Cramayel, Marquis of, 385
- Croix, Countess of, 83 n.
- Czartoriski, Prince Adam, 134 n.
- Czereja, 327 n., 372 n., 377 n.
- Czetwertenski, Princess, 539 n.
- Daendels, General, 266 n.; division of,
at Wesselowo, 387, 391 n.
- Dalberg, M. de, 72 n.
- Dalmatia, Duke of. *See* Soult, Marshal.
- Dalton, General Alexandre, 119 n.,
165 n.; and rations for troops, 118
at Smolensk, 163
- Damas, General, 201 n.
- Danubian provinces, Russian occupa-
tion of, 52, 49
- Danzig, 410, 440, 610; Lauriston visits,
56; writer on evacuation of, 62-5,
428-9; concentration of French
troops in, 68, 71; Napoleon at, 115-
118; and Poland, 454
- Danzig, Duke of, 409
- Daru, Count, 169, 257, 571; seeks to
impress truth on Napoleon, 157,
158 n.; sends letter to Paris, 547-8;
wishes for balloon, 574-5; destroys
his papers, 574; Napoleon on, 559,
570-1
- Davout, Marshal (Prince of Eckmühl),
610; commands army in Germany,
62, 419; reports on Lithuanians, 75;
corps of, 118, 126 n.; ovens of, 118;
and Balachoff, 124-5; manoeuvres
against Bagration, 126, 127 n., 156,
159, 145-7; at Saita-Nowka, 136,
145 n.; failed by Jerome Bonaparte,
145, 435; and Murat, 171; at Mos-
kowa, 194; wound of, 194 n.; at
taking of Moscow, 214; at Malo-
Jaroslawetz, 295-6; advises Napo-
leon, 305-4; at battle of Wiasma,
323; directions to, as to conduct of
retreat, 325 n.; and order to co-
operate with Ney, 325 n., 359, 361-
367; during retreat, 326; ordered to
quicken pace, 351, 355, 362; reaches
Krasnoë, 356, 361, 367; anger against,
361, 363, 366, 371; and Napoleon's
departure, 409
- Decrès, Duke, 572, 586 n., 587, 614

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

- Delaborde Division, 279 n., 288-9
 Delaitre, General, 390 n.
 Delzons, General, 294-5
 Denmark, 40
 Denon, Baron, 516
 Dery, General, 279 n.
 Desaix, General, 194 n.; division of, 145, 146 n.
 Desna, 241
 Dino, Duke of, 52 n.
 Directory, the, and Napoleon, 500-1, 503-7; and Louis XVIII, 507 n., 508 n.
 Dnieper, River, Bagration reaches, 136 n.; manœuvres on, 161-2; crossing of, 161 n., 167, 168 n., 368 n.; Ney crosses, 369-71
 Dniester, River, crossed by Army of Moldavia, 250-1
 Dobroë, 358
 Doctorov, General, division of, 126 n.; loses transport, 145 n.; at Malo-Jaroslavetz, 294-7
 Dombrowski, General, 266, 267 n., 347 n.; at Borissow, 371 n., 378; division of, 386; receives wound, 386
 Doppet, General, 500 n.
 Dorogobouje, 171-2, 181, 189 n.; Napoleon at, 172, 174, 326; burning of, 175; Ney attacked near, 335, 339
 Doubrowna, 361, 366 n.
 Douka Cuirassiers, charge of, 192 n.
 Doumerc, General, division of, 389
 Drake, Francis (Musca), 460
 Dresden, meeting between Napoleon and Francis in, 86, 100, 108-14; King of Prussia in, 114; Murat prevented from going to, 115-17; Napoleon in, 536-8; sledge left in, 557; Russians in, 620
 Drissa, 155, 157-8, 314 n.
 Drogomilow, 214 n.
 Dufour, General, 281
 Dugommier, General, 500
 Dukhovchtina, 534-5, 540
 Dumas, Count Mathieu, 156; on Daru, 169 n.; and convoy of wounded, 260
 Dumerbion, General, 500
 Dumouriez, General, 462
 Dunaberg, 251
 Dunilowice, 599
 Dupont, General, 457-8; Napoleon on, 591-2; punishment of, 592 n.
 Duchatel, Madame, 597 n.
 Duroc, Marshal (Duke of Friuli), 83 n., 256-7, 375-6; persuades writer to accept embassy, 16, 18, 21, 29; and writer's threat to retire, 77, 79, 87, 133; writer appeals to Napoleon through, 83; friendly warnings of, 84-6, 87-8; seeks to impress truth on Napoleon, 157, 158 n.; and burning of Moscow, 219; wishes for balloon, 374-5; visits Oudinot's kitchen, 596; accompanies Napoleon on journey to Paris, 404, 407, 411-12, 414-15, 417; negotiations of, in Berlin, 448 n.; signs Treaty of Fontainebleau, 450; his relation with writer, 595; arrives in Paris, 603-4; at special Council, 614 n.
 Durosnel, Count, 299; General of Staff, 149; seeks to impress truth on Napoleon, 157, 183; in Moscow, 209-10, 212-16, 285; goes to assistance of Eugène, 553-4
 Durutte, General, 267
 Dwina, River, defence works on, 71, 425; French corps on, 126, 143, 145 n., 153, 164, 268, 318-19, 373; reinforcements for corps on, 259; position on, 265; retreat from, 327; condition of corps from, 596; disorganization among troops from, 409
 Eblé, General, 123 n., 292 n.
 Eckmühl, Prince of. *See* Davout, Marshal.
 Eckmühl, Princess of, 85 n.
 École Polytechnique, proselytized by Jesuits, 584-5
 Egypt, expedition to, 503-6
 Eillaux, Mme, *Souvenirs of*, 6
 Eisenach, 547-9
 El-Arisch, 506
 Elbe, Army of Observation of, 419 n.
 Elbing, 610
 Elchingen, Duke of. *See* Ney, Marshal.
 Elizabeth Alexievna, Empress of Russia, 45 n.
 Émigrés, cowardice of, 513-14; responsible for death of Louis, 514; Army's dislike of, 542; and Little Church, 582 n.
 Enghien, Duke of, Caulaincourt held responsible for arrest of, 7, 462; arrest of, 460-3; execution of, 463-4, 488

INDEX

- England, European desire for peace with, 21 n., 25, 27, 50-1, 53, 48, 75; seeks Continental allies, 22, 35; and Continental System, 28-9, 58, 88-9, 110, 420-2, 451; and war in Peninsula, 53, 48, 71, 85, 191, 441-5, 532, 534; proposals of peace to, 37-8, 73; odium of war thrown on, 58, 47, 423-4; betrayal of Sweden by, 39; alliance between Russia and, 59-40, 176, 177 n., 179; bad faith of, 41, 423, 550; trades with French ports, 58-60; French acts alienating, 72-3; Napoleon seeks peace with, 85, 88, 91, 93-5, 420, 422, 484-5, 507, 530; makes peace with Sweden, 177 n.; Napoleon on, 421-4, 429-51, 458-41, 552; maritime ascendancy of, 421-4, 457-8, 440; debt of, 424, 459, 552; government of, 450-1, 458-9; and trade with Spanish colonies, 441, 443; plays into hands of Napoleon, 442; intrigues with Ferdinand, 455, 534; Napoleon seeks to strike through India at, 485-6, 505, 531; and expedition to Egypt, 504; and Treaty of Amiens, 529-50; at war with United States, 532-4; seeks to foment trouble in Italy, 575
- Erfurt, offered in exchange for Oldenburg, 53 n.; Napoleon in, 538, 547; French troops in, 620
- Erfurt Conference, 20-58, 42-52; Austria and, 26-7, 53, 48-9; fears for safety of sovereigns at, 27, 45; objects of participants in, 30-3; achievements of, 57-8, 42-4; German rulers at, 45-6; attitude of Alexander at, 540, 545; Napoleon considers possibilities concerning, 540-1
- Erfurt, Convention of, 30 n., 46-7; articles of, 21 n., 56 n., 57 n., 58 n., 42 n.
- Escadron sacré*, 596 n.
- Escoiquitz, Don Juan de, 455-6
- Essen, Baron von, 251
- Etruria, Queen of, 449 n.
- Eugène, Prince (Viceroy), 503 n., 407; and the succession, 51; nominated hereditary Grand Duke of Frankfurt, 72 n.; corps of, 126 n., 142 n., 610; at Ostrowno, 159 n.; crosses Dnieper, 161 n.; at Moskowa, 195-7, 198 n., 199; on dangers of stay in Moscow, 262; at Malo-Jaroslawetz, 294-5; advises Napoleon, 303-4; at battle of Wiasma, 525-4; during retreat, 525 n., 526, 534-6, 548, 556; receives setback on the Vop, 559-40; at Krasnoë, 552-4, 562; in charge of rear-guard, 568; meets Ney, 569; and command of the Army, 403-4, 610; and Napoleon's departure, 409; rallies army, 616
- Europe, in need of reassurance, 28; desires peace, 31; project of central buffer State in, 80, 94-6, 260, 451-5, 485, 541; Russia the enemy of, 418; fears Napoleon, 418-19, 429-30, 530; advantages of Continental System to, 420-2; English trade ascendancy over, 421-4, 458; in danger from England, 440, 532; Napoleon fights in interest of, 530
- "Extraordinary domain," 518, 528, 612
- Eylau campaign, 593
- Fabvier, Captain Charles, 191 n.
- Fagalde, Napoleon's outrider, 411, 415-416, 552, 559
- Fain, Baron, 407, 411-12, 604
- Faubourg Saint-Germain, 520-1
- Fauche-Borel, Louis, 507 n.
- Ferdinand, Prince of Asturias, 446 n.; bad faith of, 25, 25; abduction of, 27; plots and intrigues of, 451-4, 455-7; seeks wife, 452, 454, 456; at Bayonne, 455-7; hatred of, for his parents, 456; colonies side with, 551
- Ferté-Beauharnais, Marquis de la, 447 n.
- Finland, and Russia, 38-40, 45-4, 150, 432; Sweden's chance of recovering, 105-6; army of, 177, 251
- Fischer, General, 279 n.
- Fleury, actor, 490
- Fleury, July de, 294 n.
- Fominskoie, 293
- Fontainebleau, Pope at, 575 n., 582
- Fontainebleau, Convention of, 451 n.
- Fontainebleau, Treaty of, 40, 449 n., 450, 451 n., 452, 459; delayed ratification of, 454
- Fontanes, M. de, 489-90, 572
- Forest, Comte de la, 447 n.
- Fouché, Joseph (Duke of Otranto), 515; and Napoleon's divorce, 51-2; and arrest of Enghien, 461; Napoleon on, 488

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

- France, and Sweden, 39-40; annexes coast of Germany, 53 *n.*; infringes Continental System by sale of licences, 58-60, 65, 67, 88, 97, 112; effects of wars and supremacy on, 90-1, 98; effect of lack of news on, 372, 401-2; lack of news from, 372, 379; despatches received from, 401, 491-2, 550; has confidence in Emperor, 403, 492-3, 557, 586-7, 612; industry in, 421, 471, 531; incomplete institutions of, 431, 517; form of government needed by, 461-2, 523; Napoleon's plans for development of, 470-1; education in, 489-90; fusion between factions in, 514-15, 542; re-establishment of Church in, 515, 524, 573-7, 579-80; Napoleon envisages peerage for, 517-19, 521-2, 524, 553, 593; Napoleon's principles of government for, 519-28; conscription in, 525; source of discontent in, 527; position of old nobility in, 542-3; receives 29th Bulletin, 550-1, 557; Napoleon arrives in, 551; social order insecure in, 552-3; Napoleon on effect of his own death on, 555-4; and Catholicism, 573-4, 579, 581; clergy in, 575, 583-4, 586; annexes Papal States, 580 *n.*; effect of Napoleon's presence on, 611-12; new armies of, 619-20
- Francis II, Emperor of Austria, and Erfurt Conference, 26-7; meets Napoleon at Dresden, 108, 115, 418, 433; and Alexander, 109, 418, 432
- Frankfort, Grand Duchy of, 72, 550 *n.*
- Frankfort-on-Main, 557
- Frederica Dorothea, Princess, of Baden, 51 *n.*
- Frederick Augustus I of Saxony, 108, 554, 557
- Frederick William III of Prussia, 114, 536 *n.*, 613
- Frederick William IV (Crown Prince) of Prussia, 114
- French, Napoleon on, 486, 590; fault-finders by nature, 526; lovers of flattery, 540; resist private ambitions, 553-4; innate generosity of, 567-8; their merits and failings as soldiers, 593, 601
- French Army. *See* Grand Army.
- Freyberg, 108 *n.*
- Friant, General, 145, 161 *n.*
- Frias, Duke of, 449-50
- Frinckenstein, 483
- Friuli, Duke of. *See* Duroc, Marshal.
- Frochot, M., and Malet conspiracy, 528-31, 533-4, 524-5, 552, 611
- Fulda, 559
- Gabonielli, Princess, 452 *n.*
- Gaeta, Duke of, 488-9
- Galiccia, territory of, ceded to Russia, 61, 432; ceded to Warsaw, 94 *n.*; Poles and, 177, 617
- Galitzin, Prince, château of, 208 *n.*
- Galitzin Palace, 222, 248
- Gallican Church, 573, 579-80, 583
- Gallo, M., 501 *n.*
- Gasparin, Thomas Augustin de, 500
- Gaudin, M. M. C. (Duke of Gaeta), 488
- Gazzani, Carlotta, 598 *n.*
- Genoa, rations at, 568-9
- George, Mademoiselle, 598
- Gérard, Baron, paints King of Rome, 191
- Gérard, Marshal, 362
- German princes, at Erfurt, 45-6; greet Napoleon, 107 *n.*
- Germans, Napoleon on, 450
- Germany, French troops in, 22, 25, 45; fear of French dominion in, 24; withdrawal of French troops from, 25, 28, 31, 34-5, 42, 49; customs control in, 29, 53 *n.*, 73; Napoleon prepared to make concessions in, 35-6, 48; France annexes coast of, 53 *n.*; prohibition of Russian goods in, 58; change of French policy in, 61; secret agents in, 76; French occupation of North, 85, 97, 115; discontent in, 156, 419; industry in, 421; and English trade monopoly, 532; new French army in, 619-20
- Ghilini, Christine, 598 *n.*
- Ghjat, 184-5, 315, 323, 377 *n.*; Napoleon in, 188-9, 190 *n.*, 207 *n.*, 320; harassed communications beyond, 261, 294; destruction of equipment at, 374
- Ghorodnia, 296-7, 304; Napoleon in danger at, 298-301
- Gif, M. Debonnaire de, 191 *n.*
- Gibraltar, 440
- Girard, General, 266 *n.*, 387
- Gironde, Corps of Observation of the, 450
- Giroud, Captain, 351, 377

INDEX

- Glogau, 492, 494-7
 Gloubokoje, 375, 381, 399; Napoleon at, 156, 159; 6th Corps retires on, 265 *n.*
 Godoy, Don Manuel de (Prince of the Peace), 446, 454; proclamation of, 446-7; earns contempt of Napoleon, 447, 449, 454; sacrifices Spain, 448; confidants of, 449; receives part of Portugal, 449-51; and England, 450; and marriage of Ferdinand, 452 *n.*
 Goltz, Count von der, 541 *n.*
 Görlitz, 534
 Gourgaud, M., 168 *n.*, 212, 404 *n.*
 Gragow, 416 *n.*, 469 *n.*, 491 *n.*
 Grand Army in Russia, rations carried by, 118 *n.*; crosses the Niemen, 122-3; privations of, 124, 143, 148-149, 181, 314-16, 325, 335, 376-7, 398-400, 565-8; horses lost by, 124, 143-4, 285, 318, 356, 344, 376; lack of order in, 125, 127, 149, 175, 284-5, 287, 319, 324-6, 348, 395-6, 408-9; deserters from, 127; Russian propaganda in, 137-8, 243-4, 306; exhausted cavalry of, 144, 152-3, 182, 282, 327; condition of wounded in, 147-8, 152, 207, 314-316, 335-6, 357; shortage of supplies of, 148-9, 151-2, 184, 207, 337, 357; re-establishment of discipline in, 149-50; captures guns, 162; pillage by, 181-2, 188, 287; Cossack prisoner on, 187-8; destruction of carriages of, 189-90; evacuation of wounded of, 260; interrupted communications of, 262, 278, 294, 344, 347, 351, 360, 372; strength of, in Moscow, 265; reserves of, 266; criticisms of, 280-3, 301, 304-5, 319; and Russian peasants, 287; reinforcements of, 289, 319, 408; composition of, 289; food supplies of, 318, 325, 356; winter quarters of, 335, 339, 346; temper of officers of, 342, 348; suffers from lack of foresight, 345; artillery of, delays infantry, 350, 365; abandons wounded, 357; constancy and devotion of, 361, 377, 394-5, 566-8; stragglers of, 372, 391-2, 395, 400-1, 567; lack of cavalry of, 377, 395; *escadron sacré* in, 396 *n.*; has more courage than strength, 396-7; cheerfulness of, 398-9; Cossacks rob stragglers of, 400-1; lack of reinforcements for, 401; causes of failure of, 405, 425; Napoleon's departure from, 409, 412-13; continued retreat of, 558, 615, 619; condition of officers in, 565-7; lacks food, 566-7; lacks morale, 569-70; in Wilna, 605-8; rout of, 606-7; illness in, from injudicious eating, 615-16; Eugène rallies, 616, 619
 Gravert, Lieutenant-General von, 251
 Gravina, Duke of, 531 *n.*
 Grouchy's Horse, at Krasnoë, 162 *n.*
 Guard. See Imperial Guard.
 Gudin, General, 145; crosses Dnieper, 161 *n.*; death of, 167-8
 Guéheneuc, Colonel de, 123-4
 Guidal, General, 328-9, 332, 555
 Guilleminot, General, 295, 553
 Guillot, M., 59 *n.*
 Gumbinnen, 415, 615
 Gustavus IV, King of Sweden, convention between England and, 39 *n.*; projected marriage of, 51 *n.*
 Guyard, Captain, 140 *n.*
 Gy, M., 234, 314
 Hague, The, 82
 Hamburg, annexation of, 422; Spanish troops in, 451 *n.*
 Hanau, 550
 Hanover, 72
 Hanseatic towns, 72, 422 *n.*
 Harpe, General, 559 *n.*
 Harville, 559
 Hatzfeld, Prince, 613 *n.*
 Hauterive, d', 614 *n.*
 Haxo, General, 119, 121 *n.*
 Hedouville, General, 507 *n.*
 Heligoland, 440
 Henry, Colonel, 332
 Hogendorp, Count van, 406-7, 412-13
 Holland, independence of, 40; annexation of, 72, 422 *n.*; Napoleon's tour of, 81-2
 Holstein-Euten, Duke Peter Frederick Louis, 53 *n.*
 Holstein-Oldenburg, Duke Frederick George of, 51 *n.*
 Hortense, Queen, 85 *n.*
 Hulín, General, 328-9, 332, 555
 Ideville, Baron d'. See Lelorgne, M.
 Illyria, 94-5, 432, 434; regiment from, 288 *n.*

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

- Hovański, cavalry of, at Vop, 340
 Imperial Guard, losses among, 124; disorganization in, 148-9, 399; reorganization of, 150-1; at Moskowa, 197, 199-200; importance of re-serving, 200, 377; fights fire in Moscow, 221; loses men in skirmish, 265; strength of, 263; at Malo-Jaroslavetz, 295; at Ghorodnia, 301-2; Generals commanding, 303 *n.*, 554 *n.*; wounded of, 314; retreat of, 326, 349; goes to assistance of Eugène, 353-4; Napoleon's belief in, 372; crosses Beresina, 387-8, 391; smartness of, 396; suffers from frostbite, 399-400; embezzlement carried on by, 523; Napoleon on, 554, 608; desertion from, 558; in Kovno, 607; in new army, 620
 India, expedition planned against, 485-6
 Infantado, Duke of the, 455
 Inkowo, battle of, 160 *n.*
 Insterburg, 615
 Isquierdo, M., 449-50, 452, 459; in Madrid, 454, 455 *n.*, 459
 Istria, Duke of. *See* Bessières, Marshal.
 Italian division, 289; at Malo-Jaroslavetz, 294-5; at the Vop, 340; capture of battalion of, 350
 Italy, evacuation of, 40; Murat's ambition for united, 117, 569; Army of, 500; Napoleon in, 500-2; Pope exiled from, 575, 576, 581
 Ivan Veliki, cross of, 264-5, 546 *n.*
 Jacobins, 522-3
 Jaffa, 506
 Jakowief, Alexis, 237 *n.*
 Jaubert, Count François, 563-4
 Jena, battle of, 447
 Jerome Bonaparte, King of Westphalia, Hanover ceded to, 72 *n.*; Napoleon on, 118, 455; army under, 126 *n.*; deserts Napoleon, 145-7
 Jesuits, proselytizing by, 583-6
 Joanneau, Dr., 235 *n.*
 Joinville, Baron Louis, 156
 Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain, recognized by Russia, 60, 458; incompetence of, 71; review of regiment of, 82 *n.*
 Josephine, Empress, 500; divorce of, 50-2; powers of persuasion of, 487; Napoleon's love for, 597; and Napoleon's amours, 598
 Jouan, Dr., 255 *n.*
 Joyeux, Battalion-Commander, 390 *n.*
 Junot, General (Duke of Abrantès), 288, 305 *n.*; at Valutina, 167-9; at Moskowa, 197; at Mojaisk, 259, 288 *n.*, 315; during retreat, 326, 355-6, 558; in Spain, 450; occupies Portugal, 454; Napoleon on, 545
 Kalouga, 271, 291, 323 *n.*; Russians established on road to, 241-2; Napoleon prepared to attack, 278-9
 Kamen, 395-5; road to, 388, 394, 397
 Kasan, Russian "retreat" towards, 215, 223, 226, 238-9, 241
 Kielmannsegge, Countess of, 103 *n.*
 Kellermann, Marshal (Duke of Valmy), 551-2
 Kléber, General, 506
 Kleist, General, 615 *n.*
 Klicki, Colonel, 143 *n.*
 Kolotskoie Abbey, 288
 Königsberg, 15 *n.*, 267 *n.*; route to Paris through, 415-16; headquarters at, 610; sick in, 615
 Konopka, Captain, 368 *n.*
 Konownitzin, General, 139 *n.*
 Korsach, Baron, 584 *n.*
 Korytnia, 349; Napoleon at, 344-5, 350; Davout at, 356, 362
 Kostritz, 382, 388 *n.*
 Kovno, Napoleon at, 123-4, 414-15; march from, 124 *n.*; supplies at, 408; behaviour of Guard in, 607
 Krasinski, Count, 246
 Krasnoë, 162, 303, 546 *n.*, 558 *n.*, 570; battles of, 349 *n.*, 350-4, 356, 362; Ojarowski in, 350; Eugène's arrival at, 352-4; Davout reaches, 356, 361, 367; question of return to, 364
 Kremlin, Napoleon in, 216, 226; saved from fire, 221; Napoleon leaves, 225 *n.*; inflammable fuses in, 224; furnishing of, 248; blowing up of, 291, 313, 340 *n.*
 Kurakin, Prince, 77 *n.*; writer refuses to mislead, 77-8, 89, 97; Napoleon and, 86; "imperious" note of, 110
 Kutno, 485-4
 Kutusoff, General, 380, 387, 397, 528; makes peace with Turkey, 107 *n.*; joins Russian Army, 183, 186, 189; at Austerlitz, 187; conceals defeat, 215, 217-18; and burning of Moscow, 217, 241 *n.*; and retreat of

INDEX

Kutusoff, General—*continued*.

Russian Army, 226, 258-9, 241, 243;
Lauriston seeks to conclude armistice
with, 254-5, 272, 275, 277; desires
peace, 254, 256, 269, 272, 275; and
Army of Moldavia, 266, 275, 368,
578; Napoleon determines to attack,
268, 270, 272-4, 276, 278, 291, 295,
505-4; his reply to Berthier, 277;
surprise attack of, 278-82; rein-
forcements of, 289; in Taroutino,
292-3; and Malo-Jaroslavetz, 295-
297; refuses to join battle, 298, 503-4;
pursuit of, 522-3, 526, 355, 549, 551,
555, 426; proclamation of, 540;
tactics of, 354-5, 358, 368, 380;
leaves road clear, 558 *n.*; Napoleon
on, 575, 426; irresolution of, 578

La Besnardière, M., 614 *n.*
La Forest, Comte de, 16-17
La Romana, Marquess of, 451
Laborde, Count de, and Malet's con-
spiracy, 329, 555
Labouchère, M., 75
Lafayette, Marquis de, 521
Lahorie, General, 528-9, 551-5, 555
Lambert, General, at Borissow, 571 *n.*,
578 *n.*; occupies Minsk, 575
Lamoignon, Mademoiselle de, 571 *n.*
Lamothe, General, 355
Lanabère, General, 198 *n.*, 201 *n.*
Lannes, Marshal, 525; Napoleon on,
545-5; and Alexander, 544-5
Lanskoï, General, 595
Laplace, M. de, 555
Lariboisière, General, 221 *n.*
Larrey, Surgeon-General, 600
Latour-Maubourg, General de, 189,
326 *n.*, 354; cavalry under, 126 *n.*;
at Winkovo, 281
Lauriston, Count de, 299; Ambassador
to Russia, 54 *n.*, 56, 75, 85; and
Longuerue, 99-100; Alexander re-
fuses to receive, 129; rejoins Napo-
leon, 178-9; sent with overtures of
peace, 254-5, 268-9, 275, 277-8;
sent to Warsaw, 410, 483
Laval, Mme de, 105 *n.*
Lavalette, Count, 230
Le Brun, C. F. See Piacenza, 1st Duke
of.
Le Camus, General, 590
Leclerc, General, 529 *n.*
Lecouteux, Captain, 299

Lefebvre-Desnouettes, General, 413 *n.*,
417 *n.*, 545
Legion of Honour, 522, 524
Legrand, General, 267, 395
Leipzig, 558, 545-6; spy at, 546
Lelorgne, M., 224, 227-8, 257-8
Leoben, negotiations at, 501-2
Lepel, 381
Lepel, General de, 201 *n.*
Lerminier, Dr. T. N., 255, 514
Lesseps, Baron Jean-Baptiste Bar-
thélemy de, 55 *n.*, 286 *n.*; in dis-
favour, 55; administers Moscow
during occupation, 246 *n.*, 285-6;
and emancipation of serfs, 286-7
Lesseps, Baron Mathieu de, 55 *n.*
Lettres du Cap, 465
Liadonî, 161-2, 556, 558-61; road to,
559
Likatchoff, General, 196 *n.*, 198 *n.*
Lima, M. de, 452
Lithuania, and Polish cause, 75, 126-7,
154, 155, 435-4; Russians retreat
from, 121; exhausted state of, 401;
governor of, 406 *n.*; evacuation of,
510
Little Church, 582
Ljachewo, 538
Lobau, Count of, 299; General of Staff,
149; seeks to impress truth on
Napoleon, 156-7, 158 *n.*, 185; ac-
companies Napoleon on journey to
Paris, 404, 407, 411, 412 *n.*, 414-15;
arrives in Paris, 605-4
Lochesna, 142-3
Lodi, Duke of, 505 *n.*
Loison, General, 267, 401; division of,
401 *n.*, 404, 408, 412; in Portugal,
554
Longuerue, M. de, 99-100
Loo, château of, 82, 84
Losnitsa, 577 *n.*, 578, 580 *n.*, 584 *n.*
Loss, Count de, 537
Louis XV of France, statue of, 516
Louis XVI of France, Napoleon on
execution of, 464, 515-14; Cam-
bacères and death of, 487
Louis XVIII of France, Directory and,
508 *n.*
Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland, 72 *n.*,
73 *n.*
Loudsk, 251 *n.*, 265 *n.*
Lowicz, 483 *n.*
Lübeck, annexation of, 422
Luchesini, M., 448 *n.*

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

- Lusitania, Kingdom of, 449 n.
 Lutchesia, 140, 141 n.
 Lutchiesia, River, 139, 141
 Lützen, 546; battle of, 620
- Macdonald, Marshal (Duke of Taranto), 251, 313, 408; command of, 126 n.; separated from Saint-Cyr, 514 n.; deserted by Prussians, 610
- Madeira, 440
- Madcleine, the, 515, 515-17
- Madrid, rebellion of, 446; Isquierdo in, 454, 455 n., 459
- Magdeburg, surrender of, 448
- Magnitsky, arrest of, 99 n.
- Mahrathas, 486 n.
- Mailly-Nesle, M. de, 291, 345
- Malet, General, 330 n., 554; conspiracy of, 327-34, 402, 488, 493-4, 525, 552, 554-5; inquiry into conspiracy of, 611
- Malo-Jaroslawetz, battle of, 294-7; Napoleon inspects, 505
- Malo-Wiasma, 208 n.; skirmish near, 253 n., 263
- Malta, English in, 423, 440; Napoleon takes, 504; neutral vessels and, 532 n.
- Marcolini, Count Camillo, 557
- Marescot, General de, 458, 591
- Maret, H. B. (Duke of Bassano), 76, 100, 457 n., 609; and Talleyrand, 100, 102-3, 465-6; Napoleon complains of, 105-7, 177-9, 292, 427, 465, 467-9, 541; attempts to raise Poles in arms, 127, 401; at Wilna, 155 n., 248 n., 258, 372, 417; Victor to act in concert with, 266; Napoleon writes to, 322, 483; sends Konopka to Napoleon, 368 n.; instructs Schwarzenberg, 379; Napoleon satisfied with, 405, 467; joins Napoleon, 413; and Metternich, 434; public blame for, 468; and M. de Pradt, 474-5, 478 n.; and Savary, 555; returns to Paris, 609 n.; and Frochot, 611; at special Council, 614 n.; and Schwarzenberg, 618
- Margarita, Director of Posts, 231 n.
- Maria Feodorowna, Empress of Russia, 74 n.
- Mariampol, 415-17, 470 n.
- Marie-Louise, Empress, 597; lady-in-waiting to, 56; tours Holland, 81-3; travels to Dresden, 108; marriage of, 111; at Prague, 115, 190; letters from, 190, 491; Napoleon praises, 406, 486, 491, 550; Napoleon returns to, 562
- Marie Louise, Queen of Spain, 455 n., 456
- Marie Pavlowna, Grand Duchess, 51 n.
- Marienburg, 610, 615
- Marienpol, 120-1
- Marienwerder, 610
- Marion, General, 201 n.
- Markov, Count Arcadius, 20
- Marmont, Marshal (Duke of Ragusa), 443; reverses of, 191
- Marthod, Major, 263
- Martini, Colonel, 401 n.
- Massenbach, General, 613
- Masserano, Charles Fieschi, Prince of, 449 n.
- Mathis, Madame, 598 n.
- Maupertuis, Lieutenant Lelcu de, 507 n.
- Mauritius, 486
- Mayence, 104, 550, 551 n., 559, 620
- Mcaux, 559-60
- Medyn, 314, 522
- Melzi d'Eril, François, 503
- Méneval, M., 492 n.
- Menou, General, 506
- Merle, General, 267, 327 n.
- Merlin de Douai, P. A., 515
- Merveldt, Count de, 501-2
- Mostivier, Dr., 206 n.
- Metternich, Prince, at Dresden, 108, 111, 418, 454; and Queen Caroline of Naples, 115
- Metz, 560
- Mexico, 443
- Miedniki, 407, 415
- Mikhailewska, 527, 534; road from 335
- Miloradovitch, General, 361, 378; reinforcements of, 172, 185-4, 189; in evacuation of Moscow, 209 n.; attacks retreating army, 323, 350-1; attacks Eugène, 353; withdraws before French, 356; proposes surrender to Ney, 370
- Minsk, 145, 267, 372; loss of, 347 n., 368, 371 n., 373, 378 n.; Schwarzenberg urged to advance on, 379 n., 385
- Mittau, 610
- Modlin, 483
- Mohilew, 156, 147

INDEX

- Mojaisk, French Army in, 190 n., 203-7; hospitals at, 207, 264; surprise attack near, 240 n.; Cossacks near, 258-9, 262; wounded from, 313-16; supplies at, 377 n.
- Moldavia, Russian aims concerning, 37, 43-4, 540; promised to Russia, 39-40; rumour of troops from, 58, 60; Russia acquires, 107 n.
- Moldavian Army, 177, 251, 265-6; destination of, 266, 268, 275, 319, 368, 375, 378; takes Minsk, 368, 373; marches to Borissov, 371-2, 378; on the Beresina, 378, 380-2, 389
- Molé, Count Mathieu Louis, 571
- Molé, François René, 490
- Molé de Champlatreux, M., 571 n.
- Mollien, Count, 570
- Molodetchna, 401, 406 n., 551
- Moncey, Marshal, 460
- Monge, Gaspard, 584-5
- Montbrun, General, 195, 197 n.
- Montesquiou-Fézensac, Anatole de, 402, 551, 557, 564
- Montesquiou - Fézensac, Count de (Grand Chamberlain), 564
- Montesquiou-Fézensac, Eugène de, 17
- Montesquiou-Fézensac, Madame de, 491, 550, 564 n.
- Morand, General, division of, 122, 145; crosses Dnieper, 161 n.
- Moreau, General, 507, 543; and Legion of Honour, 522
- Mortemart, M. de, 404 n.
- Mortier, Marshal (Duke of Treviso), command of, 126 n.; at passage of Tagus, 195 n.; in Moscow, 213, 215-16, 252, 279 n., 285, 288, ordered to evacuate Moscow, 291; 293, 313; captures Wintzingerode, 306-7; at Krasnoë, 351, 356; and Napoleon's departure, 409
- Moscow, Balachoff on roads to, 130 n.; Alexander in, 174; militia of, 174, 184 n.; Napoleon approaches, 204-8; evacuated by Russians, 209-10, 213, 215; French in, 211 *et seq.*; Foundling Hospital in, 212, 228; restoration of order in, 213; burning of, 215-25, 227-30, 425; pillaging of, 227; refugees of, 228-9, 246-7, 252, 316; preparations for winter occupation of, 230-6, 245, 259, 264, 270; courier service to, 230-1, 245; hospitals in, 235, 252, 264; theatrical performances in, 247; conditions in, 252, 256-7, 261; evacuation of wounded from, 260; evacuation of, 261, 290-3, 313; trophies from, 264-5, 345; retreat from, *see* Retreat from Moscow; administration of, 285-6; Wintzingerode in, 306-7; sick left in, 315
- Moskova, battle of, 150 n., 191-203, 426; casualties of, 194, 201-3, 207; empty victory of, 204-6; Russian ignorance of result of, 215 n., 217
- Mostowski, Count Thadæus, 476 n.
- Mounier, Baron, 411 n., 604 n.
- Murat, Joachim (King of Naples), 407, 602-3; in Spain, 25, 446, 450, 455, 457; meets Napoleon at Dautzig, 115-17; Napoleon on, 116-17, 171, 241, 282, 461, 569-70; Italian ambitions of, 117, 569; in command of cavalry, 126 n.; minor engagements of, 135, 159 n.; and loss of cavalry, 144, 152-5, 276, 405; responsible for loss of army, 144; crosses Dnieper, 161 n.; at Valutina, 167-9; and Davout, 171; believes Russians intend battle, 171-2; takes prisoner as guide, 186; Cossacks on, 188, 211; at Moskova, 192, 194-5, 199-200, 205; approaches Moscow, 208-10; deceived by Cossacks, 211, 214-15, 222-3, 226, 238-44, 256, 275-6; liberality of, 211-12, 226, 241; fails to push the Russian retreat, 240; continues to treat with enemy, 256; fails to retire into Woronovo, 275-6; at Winkovo, 279-282, 291; tries to calm Napoleon, 309-10; and command of Army, 405-4, 604; and Napoleon's departure, 409; and throne of Poland, 435; and Godoy, 446, 449, 455; and execution of Enghien, 461, 463-4; and Abbé de Pradt, 465; despatch from, 558; bellicose nature of, 602-3; his passion for fine trappings, 603; abandons Wilna, 604-7; incapacity of, 608; resigns his command, 610-11
- Nansouty, Comte de, 85, 260, 278
- Naples, and House of Bourbon, 40
- Naples, King of. *See* Murat, Joachim.
- Napoleon, Emperor, his esteem for writer, 5-6, 79, 133; and the

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

Napoleon, Emperor—*continued.*

Memoirs, 13-14; insists on writer's acceptance of Russian embassy, 15-19, 21, 29-30; at Erfurt, 20-38, 42-52; anti-Austrian views of, 21-3, 25-7, 34, 48-9; justifies Spanish war, 23-5; importance of agreement with Russia to, 31, 46; aims of, 31-2; and Alexander, 34, 37, 46, 48-50, 107 n., 111-14, 129-30; prepared to make concessions, 35, 47-8, 237, 268, 450; and Sweden, 40-1; desires peace, 47-8, 425, 450-1, 528; considers remarriage, 50-2, 74; on his brothers, 51, 71, 78, 118, 435-6, 569; changes his policy, 53, 61, 72; angry with writer, 54, 56, 62, 78-9, 83-4, 86, 130; his grievances against Russia, 57-8, 64, 66, 96-7, 114, 129, 132; denies warlike intentions, 66, 72, 74, 78, 84-5, 88, 91, 97, 104, 107, 423; on Alexander, 71, 128-9, 138, 179, 268, 277, 288, 418, 427-8, 444; intoxicated by military strength, 70-1, 154; and Austrian marriage, 75-4, 111; and transport for Russian war, 79-80, 148, 151; tours Low Countries, 81-2; seeks peace with England, 85, 88, 91, 93-5, 420, 422, 484-5, 507, 550; brooks no rival, 89-90, 404; his love of war, 90-1, 437, 528, 602; his power of persuasion, 91-3; his absorption in the matter of the moment, 95; at Dresden, 104, 107-8; falls from horse, 119-21; counts on early peace, 122, 128, 151, 158, 167, 205, 161, 233; crosses Niemen, 123, 417 n.; at Wilna, 125-35, 413; and Diet of Warsaw, 134-5; activity of, 135, 150, 236, 245; on granting freedom to serfs, 158, 204, 286-8; anxious for battle, 158-9, 141, 145, 154, 160, 163-4, 172, 186-7, 189; anxious for prisoners, 142-4, 182, 197, 201, 248; ignores advice of Generals, 144, 154, 156-9, 183, 341-2; reorganizes troops, 149-50, 340; irritability of, 152, 155-7; on Russian climate, 154, 249, 256, 272, 322, 425; vain illusions of, 154-5, 157, 257-8, 248-9, 255-7, 272-5, 341-2, 602; on the Poles, 155, 173, 177; ready to receive proposals of peace, 154-5,

170, 176-7, 205, 215, 426; strength of character of, 158-9; short-lived resolutions of, 164-6, 172-3, 225-6, 276; interviews prisoners, 185-8; burns carriages, 189-90; at Moskowa, 192-203, 206 n.; on occupation of Moscow, 204, 213, 236, 270-5; indisposition of, 206; before Moscow, 208-10, 211-14; in Moscow, 214 *et seq.*; and burning of Moscow, 219-221, 223, 224 n., 227-8, 252; leaves Moscow, 223, 290; seeks to open negotiations with Alexander, 228, 232, 235-8, 251-8, 261-2, 268-9, 272, 277, 312, 320; prepares for sojourn in Moscow, 230-6, 245, 259, 264; and courier service, 231, 236, 245, 258-9, 261, 347; and retreat to Kasan, 238-40; considers advance on Petersburg, 238-9; on *pourparlers* with Russians, 243-5; realizes seriousness of situation, 256-7, 259, 262, 270, 317, 339, 343-4, 375-6; and evacuation of Moscow, 261, 270-2, 275-6, 278, 290-3; fatal delay of, 261, 270-7, 425-6, 528, 541, 587; and trophies, 264-5; calls up reserves, 266-7, 273; determines to attack Kutusoff, 268, 270, 272-4, 276, 291, 293, 303-4, 352, 355-6; on his Generals, 271-2, 442-3, 553-4; on battle of Winkovo, 279, 281-2, 293; military train of, 284-5; horses of, 284 n., 302, 376 n., 615-16; camp of, 284 n., 301; consults with his Marshals, 297, 303-4; in danger of capture, 298-301; requires ever-ready escort, 302-3; and Wintzingerode, 307-13; orders sack of mansion, 509-10; and wounded, 314; postillion of, 315; on retreat, 318-19, 425-6; considers journey to Paris, 318-19, 346, 372, 397, 402-4, 409; organizes conduct of retreat, 324, 326; masses troops for attack, 325-6; and Malet's conspiracy, 327-331, 334, 402, 493-4, 552-5; forced to march on foot, 336, 359; lack of foresight of, 341-3; loses maps, 345-6; false hopes of, 347; intercepted letters of, 348 n.; puzzled by Russian tactics, 354-5, 358; hastens retreat, 358, 368, 373; on Davout's abandonment of Ney, 361, 363-5, 367; his belief in his star,

INDEX

Napoleon, Emperor—continued.

571, 504-5, 559; stimulated by reverses, 379; and crossing of Beresina, 385-6, 388; on Russian Generals, 394, 426-8; Army's devotion to, 394-5; 29th Bulletin of, 399, 402, 493, 550-1, 565, 565, 586; leaves Murat in command, 403-4, 409, 427; arrangements for journey of, 404-7, 409-10; as husband and father, 406, 486-7, 491, 510, 550, 556, 597; optimism of, 408-9, 417, 427, 480-1, 498-9, 509-10, 558-9; his journey to Paris, 411 *et seq.*, 472 *et seq.*, 536 *n.*; table of, during retreat, 414, 602; suffers from cold, 415, 476, 497; and choice of routes, 415-16; sledge of, 416-17, 471, 494, 557, 546; justifies Russian war, 418; European fear of, 418-19, 429; on administration of conquered countries, 419-22; on England, 421-4, 429-51, 438-41; on his annexations, 424, 426; on causes of failure in Russia, 425, 467-8, 481, 528, 541, 587; on establishment of navy, 431, 572; on buffer state, 431-435, 485; creates not kings but pro-consuls, 456; denies charge of ambition, 457; on Spain and Spanish war, 441 *et seq.*; on colonies, 445-4; and King of Spain, 445-6, 449, 455-6; Ferdinand seeks wife from, 452; Spanish policy of, 455-8; at Bayonne, 455 *n.*, 456; and execution of Enghien, 460-4; believes in his great destiny, 461-2, 502-3, 512; plots against, 462, 526; routine of, on journey, 469-70, 588; his plans for days of peace, 470-1; in Warsaw, 472-82; interviews de Pradt, 475-9; fascination of, 481 *n.*; worried at crossing of Prussia, 482-3, 494-7; handwriting of, 484; plans expedition to India, 485-6; his unearned reputation for hardness, 486-7; on his Ministers, 487-90, 493, 570-2, 595; on education, 489-490, 510-11; receives despatches, 490-2, 550; his poor opinion of mankind, 492, 510-11, 523, 544-5, 555, 594-6; on chance of becoming prisoner of war, 495-6; impatient of delay, 497, 556-7; buys trinkets, 498; parentage and family of, 499-

early career of, 500-1, 512; Italian campaigns of, 500-2; moderation of, 502-3, 519; offered German principality, 501; development of political principles of, 502; and expedition to Egypt, 503-6; acquires power, 507; uses Bourbon agents, 508-9; love affairs of, 512, 590, 597-8; on the Revolution, 512-14, 595-; an ardent royalist, 512-13, 594; brings about fusion between parties, 514-15, 542; and Church, 515, 573-7, 579-86; and the Madeleine, 515-17, 593; statue of, 516; on need for peerage, 517-22, 524, 553; "extraordinary domain" of, 518, 528, 612; Code of, 519; his principles of government, 519-28; shows no favouritism, 525-7, 542-3, 592; ultimate ambition of, 528; his dream of universal empire, 528; a man of reason, 528-9; maintains peace with England, 529; and pretty postmistress, 547, 549; and incident of delayed horses, 549-50, 558; on woman, 556; arrives in Paris, 560, 561-5; reception of, 561; given ration by soldier, 568-9; and Pope, 573-7, 580-3; and Tribunal, 577-8; excommunication of, 582; and proselytizing by Jesuits, 585-5; effect of journey on, 586, 588; original Russian plans of, 587; effect produced by return of, 587, 611-12; mental state of, during sledge journey, 588; his ability to sleep, 588, 599; character and habits of, 589-602; lacks social graces, 589-590, 596; sparing of praise or blame, 590-1, 594; no stickler for discipline, 592-3; clemency of, 595; suspicious attitude of, 596; dislikes change, 597; attends to everything himself, 599-600; memory of, 600; his shortcomings as commander, 600-2; receives news of loss of Wilna, 604-5, 607, 609; treasure of, 612 *n.*; pretends desire for peace, 612-14; Austrian policy of, 613-15, 617, 619; departs for Germany, 617, 619-20

Napoléon en Belgique et en Hollande, 6

Napoléon et le duc de Vicence, 6

Narbonne, Count Louis de, 542-3; and intrigue against Talleyrand, 103 *n.*

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

- Narbonne, Count Louis de—*continued*.
on mission to Alexander, 107-8,
111-13; and Austrian marriage, 111;
seeks to impress truth on Napoleon,
157; and burnt carriage, 190;
Ambassador to Vienna, 617
- Narishkin, Leon, 307, 311-13, 381 n.
- Narishkin, Marie-Antovna, 339 n.
- National Guard, 619 n.
- Neapolitan Guard, 404, 407, 412-14
- Neuchâtel, 72 n.
- Neuchâtel, Prince of. *See* Berthier,
Marshal.
- New Granada, 443 n.
- Ney, Marshal (Duke of Elchingen),
corps of, 126 n., 395, 610; pursues
Barclay, 127 n.; crosses Dnieper,
161 n., 167; at Valutina, 167-8;
at Moskowa, 195-7, 199; approaches
Moscow, 207; at battle of Wiasma,
323-4; commands rear-guard, 324-
326, 335, 339; Davout ordered to
support, 325 n., 359; at Smolensk,
344, 356-7, 361-4; ordered to
quicken pace, 351, 355, 362, 365;
danger of, 354-8, 361, 363-5, 367-8;
Davout's failure to co-operate with,
361-7; popular hero, 365, 365,
367-9; rejoins main body, 369-71;
at crossing of Beresina, 386, 389;
and Napoleon's departure, 409; Napo-
leon on, 370
- Niemantza, 378, 380, 384
- Niemen, River, French troops on banks
of, 118-20; crossing of, 122-4, 417 n.,
610; reserves called up from, 266;
retreat to, 408
- Norway, 39-40, 183 n.
- Oder, French strongholds on, 22, 24-5,
35, 42, 48-9, 428, 540-1
- O'Farril, Don Gonzalo, 451
- Ojarowski, General, 350-2
- Old Regime, nobility of, 514, 521-2,
542; administration of, compared
with that of Empire, 525; intrigues
under, 526-7; peculation under,
527; Napoleon on men of, 555;
clergy of, 582 n.
- Oldenburg, occupation of, 53, 97, 428;
Erfurt offered in exchange for,
53 n., 63, 75
- Oporto, 553 n.
- Orcha, 266, 316, 371, 377 n.; Napo-
leon plans winter quarters at, 355,
559; retreat via, 339 n., 341;
Napoleon at, 366, 368-9
- Ordener, General, 462
- Orloff, Count, 170 n., 176
- Orloff-Denissoff, General d', 338 n.
- Oschmiana, 401, 406-7, 411-12, 413 n.;
Cossack raid on, 412
- Ostermann-Tolstoi, Alexander, 550 n.;
corps of, 139 n., 349, 350; at
Winkovo, 280
- Ostrolenka, 610
- Ostrowno, battle of, 139
- Otranto, Duke of. *See* Fouché, Joseph.
- Otto de Mosloy, Louis Guillaume, 617
- Oudinot, Marshal (Duke of Reggio),
82 n., 372 n., 377, 393; corps of,
126 n., 372, 395-6; pursues Barclay,
127 n.; defeated by Wittgenstein,
153 n.; wounded at Polotsk, 265 n.,
377; Napoleon on, 272; success of,
380; Corbinau carries information
to, 382-5; at Wesselowo, 383 n.,
386; wounded at Beresina, 389,
393 n.; condition of troops under,
396
- Ouspenskoje, 317, 320 n.
- Pahlen, General, 380
- Paoli, General, 500
- Papal States, annexation of, 580
- Paris, receives news of Napoleon,
347-8; 29th Bulletin received in,
493, 550-1, 565, 565, 586-7;
Napoleon's arrival in, 561-5; palace
for Pope in, 581
- Paris, Treaty of, 433 n.
- Parina, Prince of. *See* Cambacérès,
Arch-Chancellor
- Partouneaux, General, 266 n., 387;
surrender of, 388-92; Napoleon and,
390 n., 392, 394, 425
- Pasquier, Baron, and Malet's con-
spiracy, 327-9, 332, 493, 556;
Napoleon on, 571
- Paul, Tsar of Russia, and disposal of
daughters, 74 n.; and Poland, 75
- Peninsular War. *See* Spanish War.
- Pérouse, M. de la, 286
- Périgord, Edmond de, 52
- Petersburg, writer Ambassador to, 5-6,
19-21, 29-30, 53-7; French ob-
jective, 158, 153; outcry for war at,
184; Napoleon considers march on,
238

INDEX

- Petrowskoie, 223, 226, 238 *n.*; refugees at, 229
- Peyrusse, M., 492 *n.*
- Piacenza, Anne-Charles Le Brun, 2nd Duke of, 157, 308
- Piacenza, Charles Le Brun, 1st Duke of, 157 *n.*; secret agent, 508; Napoleon on, 509
- Piedmont, 40
- Pino, General, Italian division of, 289, 294, 295 *n.*; wounded at Beresina, 393 *n.*
- Pitt, William, 38-9
- Pius VI, Pope, 501
- Pius VII, Pope, captivity of, 572-5, 576, 581-2; Napoleon's relations with, 574-5, 580, 585; and Second Concordat, 575 *n.*; loses Estates, 580; as Bishop of Paris, 581, 585
- Platow, Archbishop, 174
- Platow, Count, negro cook of, 185; at Winkovo, 280-1; pursues Grand Army, 523 *n.*, 535-6, 578; harries Ney's force, 371
- Plauzonne, General, 201 *n.*
- Plechnitsie, 381, 395 *n.*, 395, 597 *n.*
- Plock, 610
- Pniewo, 530, 555
- Podolsk, 241, 243 *n.*
- Poland, partition of, 23-4, 75, 432; Napoleon's purposes concerning, 55, 61 *n.*, 64-8, 72, 80, 88, 97, 176, 255, 418, 432-5; relations with Russia, 75-6, 126-7; restoration of, as buffer state, 94, 260, 431-5; Russian retreat from, 121, 125-6; Lithuanians and restoration of, 154, 433; fails to give support desired, 173, 177, 541; raising of levies in, 259, 267, 271, 401, 405, 427, 468, 477-8, 481, 483, 510; French Army enters, 398-9; exhausted state of, 401, 433, 481; route across, 415-18; Napoleon's stepping-stone, 433-4; question of King for, 434-5; Abbé de Pradt on condition of, 477-8; defence of, 478; Napoleon grants money to, 482-3; Austria and, 616
- Poles, Napoleon on, 155, 175, 177; in Russian campaign, 173, 193, 245; at Moskowa, 194, 199; trophies of, 265; abandon bridge-head, 578
- Polignac, Armand and Jules de, 464
- Polish Convention, 61, 67
- Polish Cossacks, Napoleon counts on reinforcement by, 250, 259, 268, 270-1, 518, 544, 597, 481; fail to materialize, 544, 401; for defence of Poland, 478; need for, 510
- Polotsk, battle of, 251, 265 *n.*, 518; Napoleon hears of, 522
- Pomerania, Swedish, as compensation for Norway, 40 *n.*
- Ponary, vehicles abandoned near, 604 *n.*, 606-7
- Poniatowski, Prince, corps of, 126 *n.*; fails to receive orders, 146; Napoleon's complaints against, 175; successes of, 195, 245; after Moskowa, 208; enters Podolsk, 241; at Winkovo, 281; approaches Ghjat, 514; at battle of Wiasma, 525-4; marches to Smolensk, 525 *n.*, 526
- Portugal, England and, 53, 71, 452; division of, 449-51; and Continental System, 450, 452; Spanish troops in, 451; French occupation of, 454; Soult and, 553-4
- Poscherum, 610 *n.*
- Posen, 487, 490-2, 610
- Posniakof Palace, 247 *n.*
- Potocka, Countess, 404 *n.*, 454 *n.*; *Memoirs* of, 454 *n.*, 485 *n.*
- Potocki, Count Stanislas, 473 *n.*, 476; Napoleon receives, 480
- Pradt, Abbé de, Archbishop of Malines, Ambassador at Warsaw, 102, 104, 292, 475 *n.*, 482; Napoleon's complaints against, 271, 292, 405, 427, 475, 480, 483, 541-2; choice of, 465; his account of Napoleon in Warsaw, 475 *n.*; Caulaincourt interviews, 475; his interview with Napoleon, 475-9, 482; Napoleon orders dismissal of, 478-80; and Countess Walewska, 483 *n.*
- Prago, 471
- Pretorian Guards, 523, 578
- Provence, Count of, 594 *n.*
- Prussia, French occupation of, 22, 24-6, 32, 36, 42-3, 48-9, 540-1; writer's suggestion concerning, 28; Russian interest in, 52-3, 55; indemnity to be paid by, 45, 48; concentration of French troops in north, 68; Hanover given to, 72 *n.*; offensive and defensive alliance with, 86, 100, 107 *n.*; King of, and Napoleon, 114, 456; an undependable ally, 257, 613-14; Napoleon

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

Prussia—continued.

proposes crossing, 318-19, 415, 482-3; as a buffer state, 435-6; Godoy nearly procures peace for, 447-8; crossing of, 494-8; Daru in, 539; possible results of liberation of, 541; retreat into, 610, 615
 Prussians, York in command of, 251; Napoleon on, 436; make treaty with Russia, 610, 615
 Prutjany, 378
 Pultusk, 416, 470

Quam memoranda (Papal Bull), 582 n.

Rabbe, Colonel, 328, 350, 552
 Radutice, 377 n.
 Ragusa, Duke of. *See* Marinont, Marshal.
 Rambuteau, M. de, 105
 Rapp, General, 62, 75, 299, 352; Governor of Danzig, 116-17; at Moskowa, 194; sent to Danzig, 410
 Rastadt, Congress of, 505
 Reggio, Duke of. *See* Oudinot, Marshal.
 Reichstadt, Duke of, 15 n.
 Rémusat, Augustin Laurent, 571
 Rémusat, Madame de, 571 n.
 Repnin, Prince of, 217 n.
 Retreat from Moscow, 290 *et seq.*, 601-2; loss of horses in, 285, 518, 521, 536, 345, 359; wounded in, 514-16, 355-6; plight of carriages in, 515-17; food shortage in, 518, 521, 565-7; foraging during, 521; state of roads during, 556, 544-5, 548, 559-60; cold experienced during, 576-7, 599-400, 405, 414-15, 558, 605-7; continuation of, 558; condition of officers during, 565-7; abandonment of vehicles in, 604, 606-7. *See also* Grand Army.
 Reubell, M., 504
 Revolution, French, Napoleon on, 512-514, 593; monument to victims of, 516; gave power to England, 529
 Reynval, Count Gérard de, 407; Napoleon assumes name of, 407 n., 473
 Reynier, General, 519 n., 573; corps of, 126 n., 175 n.; at Wolkowysk, 573 n., 579 n.; evacuates Dresden, 620 n.

Rhine, Napoleon crosses, 551; French troops cross, 619-20
 Ribes, François, 235
 Riga, defence works at, 71; operations against, 127 n., 408 n.
 Rivière, M. de, 464
 Rocca-Romana, Duke of, 413 n., 414 n.
 Roederer, Count, 461
 Roguet, General, 552
 Rohan-Chabot, M. de, 176 n.
 Roman Catholicism, France returns to, 573-7, 579
 Romanowo, 358
 Rome, King of, 491; portrait of, 191; arming of Europe against, 450; question of tutor for, 510, 571; lack of loyalty towards, 552-3
 Romeuf, General, 201 n.
 Rossasna, 161-2
 Rostopchin, M., leaves Moscow, 215; result of Moskowa kept from, 215, 217; and burning of Moscow, 217, 220, 224-5; destroys his own house, 229-30
 Roustam, 407 n., 411, 469, 481 n., 586
 Rovigo, Duke of. *See* Savary, General.
 Royalist Party, 461
 Rügen, 39 n.
 Rumiantsof, Count Nicolas, and negotiations of peace with England, 21, 38; and Baron Vincent, 26; and threatening attitude of France, 55, 110, 129, 485; and Polish Convention, 61 n.; and Russian marriage, 74; Napoleon on, 484-5
 Rumigny, M. de, 473
 Rumziki, 407
 Russia, writer sent as Ambassador to, 5-6, 15-19; Savary sent to, 15, 17; importance of friendship with, 21, 31; relations with Austria, 22-3, 27, 34-7, 42-3, 66; interests of, at Erfurt, 32-5; importance of peace to, 32-5, 46; and Finland, 38-9, 43-4; treaty between England and, 39-40, 176, 177 n.; and Sweden, 40-1, 43-4; victimized by England, 41; and results of Erfurt, 43-4; commercial difficulties of, 43-4, 57 n., 58-60, 531; question of matrimonial alliance with, 51-2, 73-4; integrity of, 54, 60; Napoleon threatens war on, 55-7, 60 *et seq.*, 85, 111-15; ukase forbidding foreign imports to, 57-8; Napoleon's griev-

INDEX

Russia—continued.

- ances against, 57-8, 64, 66, 96, 97, 485, 551; and Treaty of Vienna, 60-1, 72; Tsar on results of invasion of, 68-70; preparations for war on, 80; dangers of war with, 95, 98, 104 *n.*, 159, 184; and Austrian mediation, 104, 109-10; peace between Turkey and, 105-6, 107 *n.*, 467-9; treaty between Spain and, 107 *n.*; invasion of, 115 *et seq.*; called to arms, 137, 174; evacuation of, in path of French Army, 139, 142, 151, 175, 183-4, 287; Napoleon on climate of, 154, 249, 256, 272, 322; supposed discontent in, 218; difficulty of obtaining news in, 248; Napoleon justifies war on, 418, 433, 485; causes of failure in, 425, 467-8, 481; possible demands of, 428-9, 613-14; and English monopoly, 440-1; importance of, to Continental System, 484-5, 551; lack of money in, 551; Napoleon's original plans for attacking, 587 *n.*; Austrian armistice with, 618 *n.*
- Russian Army, retreat of, 120-6, 127 *n.*, 135, 142, 170-1, 175, 185, 206, 425-6; commanders of, 126 *n.*; unites at Smolensk, 137, 152, 161 *n.*; insufficient strength of, 137, 154, 428; evacuates Drissa, 137-8; abandons Witepsk, 141-2; new method of warfare of, 145, 167, 181, 262; abandons Smolensk, 164-7, 170; incendiarism of, 170, 180-1; changes in formation of, 183, 186-7; reinforcements of, 172, 183, 189, 275, 289; prisoner on generals of, 185, 188; dissatisfied with Barclay, 186; night attack of, 192; tenacity of, 201; supposed disaffection in, 215, 226, 239, 248; "retreat" of, towards Kasan, 215, 225, 226, 238-9, 241-2; fails to make most of opportunities, 242-5, 281, 296, 342-3, 354-6, 387, 393-4; war-weariness of, 254, 272, 275, 318; Kutusoff's proclamation to, 340; dividing of, 528
- Sacken, General, 368 *n.*, 373 *n.*, 379 *n.*
- Saint-Aignan, Baron de, 558, 546, 558
- Saint-Aubin, General Huard de, 201 *n.*
- Saint-Cyr, Marshal, 303 *n.*, 322; corps of, 126 *n.*, 377; on the Dwina, 175; wounded at Polotsk, 251, 265, 267, 318; reserve for, 266; Napoleon on, 271-2, 318
- Saint-Denis, basilica of, 513
- Saint-Geniès, General de, 135-6
- Saint-Germain, General, 281
- Saint-Jean-d'Angely, Regnault de, 592 *n.*
- Saint-Jean-les-Deux-Jumeaux, 559
- Saint-Sulpice, General de, 263
- Salcedo, Juste, 531 *n.*
- Salta-Nowka, battle of, 136-7, 145 *n.*, 147
- Saluces (Saluzzo), Baron de, 604, 607, 616 *n.*
- Samlowo, 522, 555 *n.*
- San Domingo, 529
- Sapiéha-Koswnaki, Prince, 127
- Sardinia, King of, 40
- Savary, Captain, 140 *n.*
- Savary, General (Duke of Rovigo), 586 *n.*; sent to Petersburg, 15; mediates for writer, 79, 85, 87; and Talleyrand, 101; and Malet's conspiracy, 527-35, 488, 493-4, 555-6; and arrest of Enghien, 464 *n.*, 488; Napoleon on, 487-8, 555-6
- Saxe-Weimar, Grand-Duke Charles Frederick of, 51
- Saxony, 94; Napoleon crosses, 494, 554-5, 557
- Saxony, King of. *See* Frederick Augustus I.
- Schwardino redoubt, 191 *n.*, 202 *n.*
- Schwarzenberg, Prince, 47, 111, 319 *n.*, 372-3, 478, 483; command of, 127 *n.*; successes of, 173-4, 379; retreats before Tchitchagoff, 251 *n.*, 265 *n.*, 266 *n.*; his letter to Berthier, 257-8; reserves for, 266; reinforcements of, 347; Napoleon hopes for support from, 379, 385, 397, 405, 408, 417, 499; and Minsk, 379 *n.*, 385; has audience with Napoleon, 617-18; on Austrian plans, 618
- Sébastiani, General, compelled to retreat, 160; commands advance-guard, 239 *n.*; and Cossacks, 245-4; at Winkovo, 280-2; at Krasnoë, 346 *n.*
- Ségur, Captain Octave de, 125
- Selitché, 402 *n.*
- Semonville, M. de, on war with Russia, 104 *n.*
- Senate, 431, 517, 524

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

- Senatus-consultum*, 53 n., 72 n., 518 n., 578 n.
- Serfs, granting of freedom to, 138, 204, 286-8
- Serra, Baron de, 534, 556-7; his account of Napoleon's visit, 538 n.
- Seslawin, Colonel, 412 n.
- Shée, Count of, 460
- Sienna, 327
- Sierock, 471, 484
- Sicyès, Abbé, 507
- Signeul, consul, 40 n.
- Silesia, 497 n.
- Slawkowo, 322-6
- Slonim, 378, 379 n., 397 n.
- Smith, Sidney, 505 n.
- Smolensk, Russian Army unites at, 157, 152, 161 n.; evacuation and burning of, 162-7; Napoleon at, 166, 169, 337-44; supplies near, 181, 377 n; ammunition burned at, 244; Victor near, 266; Baraguay d'Hilliers at, 267, 555; Napoleon's plans for, 275, 291, 327, 334-5; "plenty" at, 335, 337, 344; cause of abandonment of, 339, 346; Napoleon leaves, 344; Ney in, 356-7, 361-4; looting of, 356-7, 362; wounded abandoned in, 357; blowing up of, 364 n.
- Smoliany, 372 n., 377
- Smorgoni, 404 n., 406-7, 411, 413, 604 n.
- Soldier, Commandant, 528, 554, 552
- Soult, Marshal (Duke of Dalmatia), 271, 445; in Portugal, 555-4
- Souvenirs du duc de Vicence*, 6
- Spain, partition of, 25-4; unsatisfactory position of, 57, 71, 76, 191, 204, 485; defeated but not beaten, 69, 444; treaty between Russia and, 107 n.; establishment of confidence in, 441; loses colonies, 445, 551, 553-4; lost to Charles IV, 446; sacrificed by Godoy, 448; and Continental System, 450; French troops occupy, 450, 454; no treaty possible with, 454; Napoleon's choice of policy concerning, 457; declares war on England, 551
- Spaniards, Napoleon on, 445
- Spanish War, 236; Napoleon justifies, 23-5; European views on, 50-1, 36; troops withdrawn from Germany for, 51, 34, 42-5, 48; Napoleon condemned for, 98; Napoleon on, 441 *et seq.*, 541
- Speranski, arrest of, 99 n.
- Staŕki, 397-8
- Staroi-Borissow, 384-5, 388 n., 389 n., 390
- Steinheil, General, 251 n., 265 n.
- Stéphanie of Baden, Princess, 45
- Stockholm, secret convention at, 39 n.
- Stoikowski, Colonel, 413 n.
- Strogonoff, Count, 280, 282, 458 n.
- Studianka, 382 n., 383 n., 385-6, 388
- Suite des Souvenirs du duc de Vicence*, 6
- Surat, 486
- Surugue, Abbé, 221 n.
- Sweden, and Continental System, 38, 40, 43, 178; betrayed by England, 39; seeks to appropriate Norway, 39-40, 183 n.; and Russia, 40-1, 43-4, 105-6, 177, 183 n., 467-8; Napoleon counts on support of, 105-6, 178; makes peace with England, 177 n.; Maret's failure to bribe, 467
- Swedes, join forces with Russians, 251 n.
- Swenziany, 135-6
- Switzerland, independence of, 40
- Taillis, Count du, 480, 484
- Talleyrand, Madame de, 466
- Talleyrand, M. de, and Napoleon's divorce, 50-2; in disfavour, 85, 101-105, 465; offered mission to Warsaw, 100-1, 465, 483; intrigues against, 102-4, 465; Napoleon on, 101-2, 427, 459-60, 465-6; and Spain, 445, 459; and Godoy, 449; and Treaty of Fontainebleau, 450, 452, 459; apostle of discontent, 459; and Duke of Enghien, 460-1, 463; ambition of, 465-6; wife of, 466; and mission to Constantinople, 505; at special Council, 614
- Talleyrand-Périgord, Duke de, 52 n.
- Taranto, Duke of. *See* Macdonald, Marshal.
- Tarifa, 440
- Taroutino, 245 n., 275 n., 280; entrenchments of, 281, 292-5
- Tarquino, Signor, 245-7
- Tascher de la Pagerie, Stéphanie, 452 n.
- Tauroggen, Convention of, 610 n.
- Tchalitz, division of, 386
- Tcharniki, 265 n., 267, 268 n.
- Tchernitchnia, the, 275 n., 281
- Tchernychev, Alexander, 69, 313, 381, 458

INDEX

- Tchitchagoff, Admiral, 107 *n.*, 173 *n.*, 378, 467; commands Army of Moldavia, 251 *n.*, 265 *n.*, 266 *n.*; captures Minsk, 547 *n.*, 568 *n.*, 578 *n.*, 605 *n.*; marches on Borissow, 571-2; Napoleon on, 575; defeat of advance-guard of, 580; and crossing of Beresina, 586-7, 589, 591, 605 *n.*; follows French Army, 597
- Tchovitz, 597
- Tharreau, General, 201 *n.*
- Theremin, M., 538 *n.*
- Thorn, 610, 615
- Tilsit, 610
- Tilsit, Treaty of, 435, 450, 551; promises made at, 19-20, 52; underlying idea of, 23, 50; made possible by England's bad faith, 41; Napoleon violates, 53 *n.*; Russia profits by, 452
- Tolentino, 501
- Tolotchine, 373, 377
- Tolstoy, Count Peter, 19; Russian Ambassador to Paris, 16; Napoleon on, 20
- Tormasov, General, 558 *n.*; command of, 126 *n.*; Schwarzenberg's victory over, 175 *n.*; Tchitchagoff joins, 251 *n.*, 265 *n.*, 266 *n.*, 368
- Toula, 291
- Toulon, siege of, 500
- Toussaint-Louverture, 529 *n.*
- Toutoumine, M., 228, 252, 246, 315
- Tracy, Destutt de, 333, 521
- Trafalgar, battle of, 531 *n.*
- "Treaty of Concert," 59-40
- Treviso, Duke of. *See* Mortier, Marshal.
- Tribunate, 577-8
- Troitskoie, 291
- Tsarewo, 183
- Tsarewo-Zaimitchie, 525 *n.*
- Tuchkoff, General Paul Alexeiev, 170 *n.*, 176
- Tuileries, 561 *n.*; gold in, 80, 612; State ball in, 83; Napoleon arrives at, 560, 561-2; levée at, 565-6; special Council at, 614
- Turenne, Count of, 157, 290
- Turkey, Russia seeks land of, 57, 49, 485; and Continental System, 58; betrayed by England, 59; Napoleon suggests partition of, 72, 485; Napoleon looks for aid from, 105-6; peace between Russia and, 105-6, 107 *n.*, 177-9, 467-9; English influence in, 440; and expedition to Egypt, 505-6
- Tyszkiewicz, Anna, 404 *n.*, 454 *n.*
- Tyszkiewicz, Constance, 434, 465
- Tyszkiewicz, Count Louis, 434 *n.*
- Ukoloda, 585
- United States, 525; and Spanish colonies, 444, 555-4; at war with England, 552-5
- Utrecht, 82
- Vach, 547 *n.*
- Valence Division, 146 *n.*
- Valmy, Duke of, 551-2
- Valutina, battle of, 167-9, 175-6
- Vandal, Albert, has access to *Memoirs*, 7; on selection of writer as Ambassador, 17 *n.*
- Vandamme, corps of, 126 *n.*
- Vasserot, Colonel, 119 *n.*
- Vedel, General, 592 *n.*
- Velikuliki, Treaty of, 107 *n.*
- Venezuela, 445 *n.*
- Verdun, 557
- Vergennes, Mademoiselle de, 571 *n.*
- Victor, Marshal (Duke of Belluno), 175, 265 *n.*; General of Reserves, 266; joins with 2nd Corps, 267, 322, 327; at Smolensk, 267; ordered to retake Polotsk, 522, 527; opposes Wittgenstein, 572, 577, 585; at crossing of Beresina, 587-91; spread of disorganization to divisions of, 595, 409; condition of troops under, 596
- Vienna, Talleyrand opens credit at, 101, 105
- Vienna, Peace of, 53 *n.*, 60-1, 452
- Vigenov, 546
- Villeika, 575, 599
- Villia, crossing of, 125, 400
- Vincent, Baron, sent to Erfurt, 26, 55, 540 *n.*; and Russia, 26-7, 36
- Visconti, François, 258 *n.*
- Vop, the, 559-40
- Wagram, battle of, 69
- Wairy, Louis-Constant, 407, 411
- Walewska, Countess, 485 *n.*, 598 *n.*
- Wallachia, Russian aims concerning, 57, 43, 540; promised to Russia, 59-40
- Warsaw, Talleyrand to go on mission to, 100-1, 270; Abbé de Pradt in, 270; defence of, 410, 484; Napoleon

MEMOIRS OF CAULAINCOURT

Warsaw—continued.

in, 471, 472-82, 598; Lauriston sent to, 410, 483; Maret in, 609 n.; 5th Corps in, 610

Warsaw, Diet of, 134

Warsaw, Duchy of, 76; rumour of Russian troops in, 60; Napoleon sends armaments to, 61; Galicia ceded to, 94 n.; French troops pillage, 145

Weimar, 107, 547 n.

Weimer, Marguerite Josephine, 598

Weliczewo, 321

Wellesley, Marquis of, 73 n.

Wellington, Duke of, 443, 554 n.

Wengrow, 610

Weriea, 505, 510, 520

Wesselowo, crossing of the Beresina at, 582, 586-92; bridge construction at, 385 n., 384-5; carnage at, 391-2

Westphalia, King of. *See* Jerome Bonaparte.

Westphalian Regiment, 267

Wezianino, 208, 262

Wiasma, 178, 521-5, 525 n.; burning of, 180-1, 188; battle of, 525-4

Wilkowski, 407

William II of Holland, 51 n.

William-Gustave, affair of, 59

Wilna, Alexander receives Narbonne at, 107 n., 111; Russian retreat from, 121, 125, 125-6, 127 n.; Grand Army at, 124-56, 426, 586; deserted state of, 125, 127; couriers from, 251 n.; sole source of news, 248; Westphalian brigade from, 267; Napoleon confident of rallying army at, 575, 597-9, 402, 404, 417, 478, 498, 509-10, 558-9, 605; Loison's division at, 401 n.; Napoleon's journey to, 404, 415; governor of, 406; supplies at, 408, 417, 510; evacuation of, 408, 604-9; writer in, 415-14; diplomatic corps leaves, 482; forged Russian assignats in, 609

Winkovo, 243 n.; battle of, 273, 277-282, 288, 290, 295; losses incurred at, 291

Wintzingerode, Comte de, 289, 305; in Moscow, 306-7, 310; Napoleon and, 307-13; rescue of, 513, 581 n.

Witepsk, 139, 425-6, 528, 541, 587 n.; gallant action before, 140-1; Napoleon in, 142-5, 147-61; condition of troops in, 147-8, 181; garrison left at, 161; Napoleon considers retiring to, 261, 274-5, 335; loss of, 339

Wittgenstein, General, 375, 381-2, 397, 610; command of, 126 n., 155 n.; covers Petersburg road, 153 n.; Finnish Army and, 177; reinforced by Swedes, 251 n., 265; drives back French, 268, 327 n.; Napoleon on, 272, 394, 426-7; cuts off Macdonald, 314 n.; Victor opposes, 372, 377; and crossing of Beresina, 384-5, 387-8, 390-1

Wolbert, François Georges Louis, 198

Wolhynia, inhabitants of, 155; Tormasov in, 266 n.

Wolkonsky, Prince, 254 n., 278 n.

Wolkowsky, 573 n., 379

Wonsowicz, Count Dunin, accompanies Napoleon to Paris, 404, 407, 411, 417 n., 470, 494 n., 557 n.; wife of, 404 n., 434 n.; writes account of journey to Paris, 413 n.

Woronowo, 243 n., 275-6, 288 n.; battle of, *see* Winkovo, battle of.

Wrede, General, 581 n., 599

Württemberg, Grand Duke Charles Frederick of, 51 n.

Württembergers, at Valutina, 169

Yelnia, 288, 322, 555

York, General, 251 n.; makes peace with Russia, 610; arrest of, 615

Yturbide, President, 445 n.

Yvan, Napoleon's surgeon, 206 n., 291 n., 411 n., 604 n.

Zagriaski, Nicholas, 229, 247

Zakubowo, battle of, 155

Zastrow, M., 448 n.

Zembin, 581

Zeyes, Armistice of, 618 n.

Znaim, Armistice of, 53 n.

